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HARRY BIRKETT;

THE STORY OF

A MAN WHO HELPED HIMSELF,

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“TOWN LIFE,” “LIVERPOOL LIFE,” “RAMBLES IN THE LAKE-
DISTRICT,” &c.

“ Life’s great play
May, so it have an actor great enough,
Be well performed upon a humble stage.”

LONDON :
WILLIAM TWEEDIE, 337, STRAND.

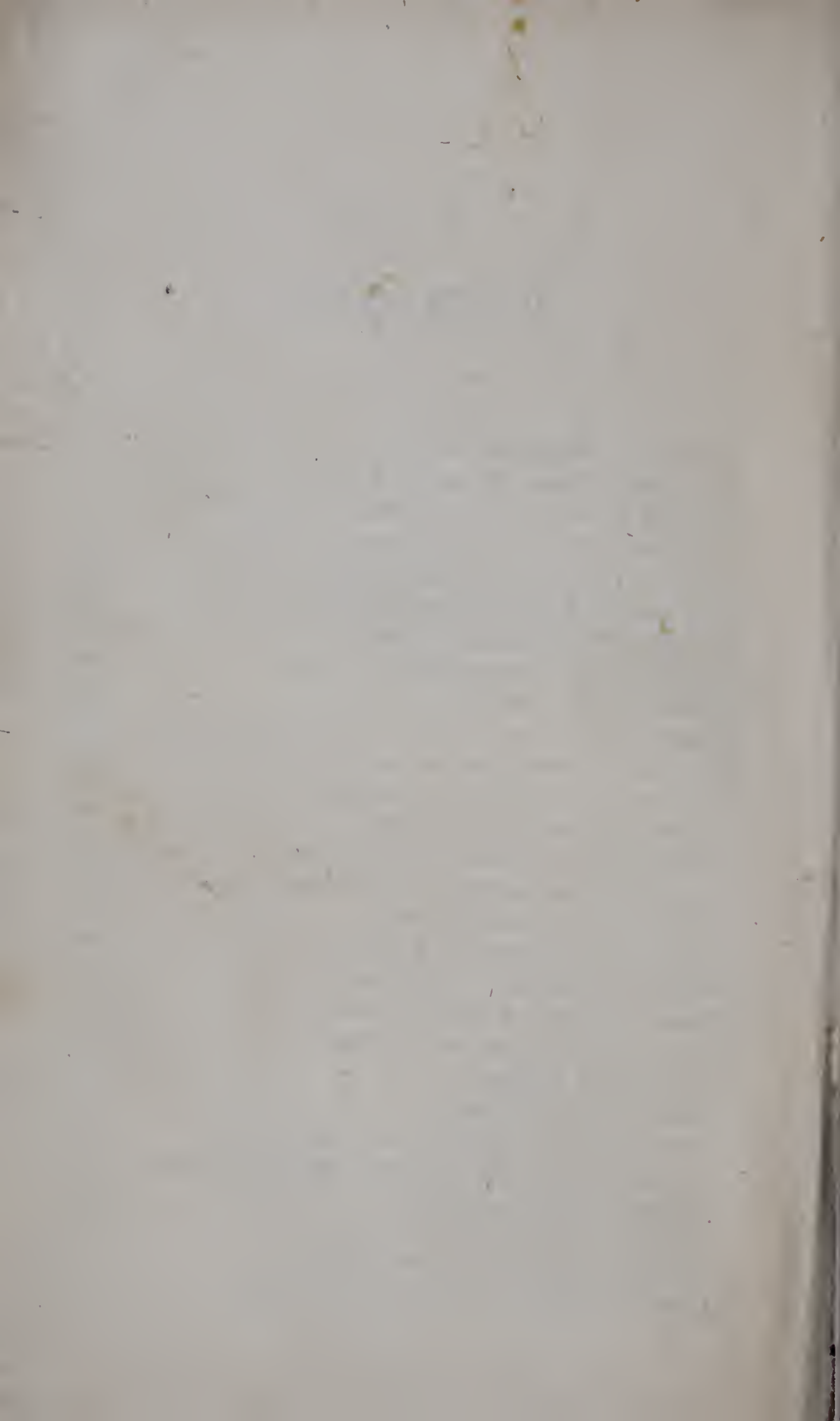
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HARRY BIRKETT;

THE STORY OF A MAN WHO HELPED HIMSELF.

CHAPTER I.

HOLIDAY AT POEBECK.

THIRTY-FIVE years ago! In the days of the brimstone match and tinder-box! In the days of stage-coaches and dear postage! In the days (as some will have it), the good old days, of an unreformed House of Commons, and a not exactly well-informed people! Before George Stephenson had completed his iron road over Chat Moss—before steam applied to locomotion was believed in—before the repeal of the bread-tax dare be hinted at; and when the admission of Roman Catholics to Parliament was declared to predicate the end of all things—when a working man who

could read and “do sums” was looked upon by his fellows as a learned man; and was looked upon by many who were not his fellows, or who did not consider themselves such, as “a dangerous person”—before England had given the death-blow to slavery in her foreign possessions—and before Englishmen at home had discovered the civilising influence of the brazen-jawed gin-palace! In those days a steamboat had not yet been seen at the port of Poebeck; and the announcement that such a spectacle might be looked upon on a fine summer’s day caused the authorities of the thriving port to proclaim a holiday. A steamboat, one with a saintly and significant title, would visit the port; yes, perhaps enter the harbour. Trade was all suspended, and all the inhabitants of Poebeck turned out to do homage to this saintly forerunner of great things to come.

Poebeck was not a large town; neither was it a clean one. It was a crowded place, an irregularly built place, yet a place which was talked about far and near. The “pits,” or mines, which surrounded it, which were dug under it, and which belched forth volumes of dense smoke over it, had made Poebeck what it was—famous. Those stiff-built brigs, manned by that active and hardy race, which lined the quay sides and filled its harbour, had

given abundant evidence, as, indeed, they yet continue to do, of the sterling qualities and dauntless courage which guides and directs the Poebeck colliers.

The town lay closely nestling at the base of fine, bold swelling hills, verdant to the summit. These were the playgrounds of the populace at certain seasons. At one point the town had begun, and had made a very successful effort to climb the hill; and long rows of cottages, the miners' dwellings, and the great Prince of Poebeck's property, formed the terrace of the high town. In another place, high flights of steps, very precipitous, conducted to the hill-side or sea-brows. At the side of these steps, nailmakers' shops, ill-designed, wretchedly dark, and badly ventilated, had been erected. The nailmakers had met, it may be supposed, with better shops (for they had deserted these), and they were now inhabited by very poor and ill-conditioned people—not very likely to become rich or well-conditioned so long as they lived in these dens. There were very fine houses in the town below; and in some of these fine houses lived the proprietors, the rent receivers, of the hovels on the Mount. These fine houses were jammed into the most curious places; and the external decoration of iron-work and fancy paving to be seen before and around

them would hardly pass muster at "Marlborough-house," notwithstanding the reason that is always assigned, "that they were built when the tobacco trade was good!"

It was a favourite ramble along the sea-brows of Poebeck. Boys, neither any of the inhabitants with strength of limb for hill-climbing, would never think of reaching the sea-brows by the Mount steps. No; they would get down past the pier and life-boat house on to the beach. They would have a game of "tick and run" over the dark sea-pitted Rocks; or they would stand and watch the sea toying with the brown tangle. How gradual were the encroachments, how imperceptible! How gently the tangle waved as the sea came on. Then how it began to roll as the action of the sea became stronger. And when it was almost engulfed, and might well-nigh be considered lost, how, as if to revenge itself, it writhed and struggled to escape, lashing the sea into foam! How vain the effort of the tangle! From the beach to the sea-brows was an invigorating climb; and, the top reached, the climber was rewarded by a grand prospect. A stretch of sea and rugged outline coast, with bold bluff headlands jutting out; and hill, dale, and smiling fields around, with the dim outline of great mountains in the distance;

such a scene as, when often gazed upon in youth, can never be forgotten. To the lover of the picturesque, the romantic, or the beautiful, the suburbs of Poebeck held out abundant charms, whilst "the looker-up of legendary lore," which, after all the alliteration, is only another name for "that learned insect the antiquarian," could hardly settle in a better locality.

Such, then, were some of what fancy writers call the "environments" of Poebeck. What were its people? The humbler classes of the community were a mixed race. Celt and Saxon were singularly blended. The shopkeepers to a man had come from the original stock in these parts, but many of their customers had come from other lands and peoples. The thriving trade led to the adoption of improvements in and about the quay; and as increased facilities were given for the increasing trade, artizans and handicraftsmen from distant towns and cities were attracted hither. Mixed as the populace was, the manners and customs of "the aborigines" were carefully preserved, particularly as regards their sports and pastimes. There were days set apart for fairs, races, and athletic sports, and these days were looked forward to with interest, and due provision made for what was considered the righteous observance and enjoyment of them. These holidays

came in the regular course; but there was now a holiday out of the course, of an extraordinary character. The visit to the port of what had long been talked of and marvelled at—a steamboat! Schools were set at liberty, miners came up from their underground burrows and tramroads, laid aside their Davy-lamps, and “donned their best.” In short, Poebeck proper came out of its narrow streets, fair houses, fine houses, and dirty houses, and got to the pier to see the packet and air itself.

The day was very fine, the steamboat, a very little one, called at the harbour. A *tin horse* had been constructed by some ambitious and ingenious inhabitant, and this was announced “to walk on the water and meet the steamer.” As the steaming saint sailed near the pier, the figure of a horse, painted green, the rider having paddles to his feet, was seen to move from beside one of the piers. How the people cheered! what a sight was that! Some forgot the steamer (they were interested in the horse). Others had no patience to look at the horse or “the crackbrain’d rider,” they had likely taken shares in the steamer. There was, though, great rejoicing; it was a public holiday.

A public holiday! yes, a day of rejoicing, when people will shout and sing, and drink; yes, perhaps quarrel, fight, create broils abroad and misery at

home, and in short enjoy themselves. A public holiday is, however, like most other things in life; it presents different aspects, according to the point from which it is looked upon; or dependent upon the coloured glasses through which people look. Under any circumstances there are two phases of the holiday which are striking, what is seen abroad, and what this leads to at home.

There stood on the pier at Poebeck, amidst the thousands there assembled to witness the arrival of this extraordinary vessel, a little boy. He was not fair, nor stout, nor rosy, neither was he well clad; but a boy dark, wiry, pale and poorly dressed. His mother held his hand in hers, and her face now and then beamed with satisfaction as she looked on the excitement and enthusiasm of her son. This was Mrs. Birkett and her darling son little Harry. She rarely went anywhere without him now. Since her husband had ceased to come home regularly in the evenings—since she had occasion to go out and lead him home—since he had formed companionships which took him from his own fireside, where he used to sit down in the evening and instruct his children—since he had become to her gloomy, or snappish, and of his house and children careless and indifferent—Mrs. Birkett had taken more than ever to the society of her eldest boy, a little fellow whom

the neighbours said she was making an old man of. He could not get regularly to school: *education was not then too cheap*, and Harry's mother was poor, because the father liked the company at the public-house better than that of his home. So it was Harry and his mother were often seen together; on the beach where the whole family would sometimes go, to gather pretty pebbles, and allow the waves to chase them; up the hills to spread clothes on washing-day; to the chapel on Sunday evenings, where the screaming woman sometimes preached, and where the singing was so merry, and so unlike Church psalms, that Harry used to learn the tunes off, and sing them at his play. Wherever Mrs. Birkett went, her boy was with her. He knew and saw most of her sorrows; he partook fully of all the joys which now fell to her lot; and it seemed to cheer her, and occasion as much pleasure as anything else, to hear the boy vowing what he would do for her and himself when he was a man! And mother and son now were gazing on this holiday spectacle.

The boy had not lived long enough to experience much of the world's ways. He had not been checked in his growth, or weakened in his digestive powers, by close confinement at home or intense application at school. Education—if by that be

meant scholastic training—he had comparatively none; but the schoolmaster which poverty provides not unfrequently develops traits of character which might, under other teachers, never be educed. He had known before this that there were two sides to a holiday; and as he passed from the pier, and left his mother to go home to baby, whilst he went up the brows to see the steamer bearing far away, he was led to reflect on what a holiday meant *to him*. It meant scanty meals, and no school wages; it meant barley-meal porridge, and little of that, with leavened barley-bread, and not even wheaten bread on Sundays; it meant giving to his mother, for the purpose of buying food, the small sums he had been taught to earn by making fishing-nets, and which were intended to provide him with shoes. It meant sitting, late at night, with his mother, listening hour after hour for the footsteps of father to approach the dwelling, and when the stumble against the door was heard, going down as quietly as he could, so that the landlady would not be disturbed by the noise of his father coming home. It meant, sometimes, waiting with mother until midnight, and then having with her to sally forth in search of him who had been “keeping up as it should be” the holiday. Going into house after house where lights were

burning and holiday-keepers were carousing, and amongst men in low, close parlours, or long, dimly-lighted kitchens—some uproariously joyous, others lying asleep, and many jabbering drunk—seeking for father, and asking if any could tell where he might be found. It meant this to him very often. Nay, more; whilst trudging through the narrow lanes, close courts, and crooked streets, the boy listened many times to the remembrances of wrongs inflicted,—remembrances wrung from the scorched yet bleeding heart of the mother he so dearly loved, and whose now faltering steps he alone had to direct. If father was missed, and had reached home in their absence, they were upbraided; if they discovered him, and endeavoured to draw him from his sottish companions, they were abused. Do what they might, they did nothing to please. A miserable night, a sorrowful morning, a pallid mother's face to greet him, and a heavy sigh to escape her, as she placed before him his scanty meal, this is what a holiday meant to Harry Birkett, as it did to thousands then, and does to thousands more now.

But the boy's playmates gathered round him, and the country ramble was proposed. Away they go, over the heather and gorse, bounding like young hounds; away they go, on to the jutting

headland, where they sit down and gaze at the busy birds around them, and the deep blue sea far, far below ; away they go, past the old farm-house, where the new hay smelled so sweet, and where the wary yard-dogs always set them on the run ; away they go, down the narrow lanes overhung with trees, and by the hedges where the foxgloves dangled, and the hazel-nuts would ere long be found ; away they go, past the fish-stream which they had read about, and then into the wood, where they would chase the squirrel and lay themselves down to rest.

Still, whilst laying in the deep recesses of the wood, Harry could not help thinking of his mother and his home. He remembered when his mother was fresh, cheerful, and happy ; he remembered when they had a house to themselves, when his father used to walk with his children into the fields, and tell them the names of all the flowers they met with, and run races, and laugh more than they all at the toddling of the little ones ; he remembered, too, that on the dark nights his father used to have them round the table, teaching them to spell or cipher, and what a game they all used to have when what they called the night-school was over, in trying to catch father's coat-tails, and what tumbles some of them got on the sanded floor. Yes—yes.

These were happy days: he was not old, but the remembrance of these things made him often feel so. Oh! what a time this was that he had passed through since they left that rose-covered cottage!

When the boys reached town that night, Harry was not surprised to find that his father had not been seen or heard of: this was, of late, the usual termination to his holiday. His sisters were in bed; mother was sitting by the fading embers with baby on her knee.

It is midnight. No father yet. The public-houses are searched, without success. There are no tidings. As day breaks, Harry, with sheer exhaustion, falls asleep, and mother lays him in bed.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. BRILL AND HER LODGERS.

“ Poor watcher ! thy lot indeed is sadness.
Doom'd as thou art to pass life's glowing noon
In solitary vigils like to this,
Which, not the first, will scarcely be the last.”

MR. AND MRS. BRILL, or, as the people of Poebeck spoke of them, old Jem Brill and his wife, lived in a comfortable house in a crooked street, not far from the Quay, and near the Market. It was an old house, a roomy house, and Brill said it was a “ lucky house ” when his wife was in it ! But this was clearly a simple matter of opinion. There was a chapel near, a church not far off ; two doctors lived within a stone's throw ; there was a baker's shop next door, a butcher's opposite, in the room over which a tailor and his family resided, and there was a joiner and coffin-maker had a yard behind—so that, as old Jem said, “ Wherever people wished to go to, or determined to go to, they might in this street meet with a proper outfitter.” “ They'll have you here at either stem or stern,” that was Brill's expression.

Mrs. Brill was a very stout little woman, cheerful, but childless. She was blessed with a kind husband, and, as she said, "pestered with an asthma." According to her statement, she often, very often, was nearly losing her breath; but she generally managed to retain her speech. Indeed, for an asthmatical person, particularly, she spoke with considerable fluency. She was said by her husband to have a wonderful stock of health, "such as it was," and a regular flow of spirits. No one ever saw her out of temper, and no one could, by any possible chance, speak to her for five minutes without hearing of the wonderful sagacity of her husband. She was one of those good genial spirits who had something good to say of anyone. She carried sugar candy or sweets of some sort in her pockets at all times and seasons, and dealt these out to children or old women; for her dear old mother was very fond of sweets, and she warned her daughter, seeing that they cost little, and comforted and cheered much, never to be without them! She carried about with her, too, beaming good-nature, and this proclaimed sunshine wherever she was seen.

Mr. Brill was a fisherman. He had a small boat of his own, and the season being on now he was out frequently all night. His wife feeling lonely,

she had, as she said, "as much for company sake as anything else," let off two apartments to Mrs. Birkett and her family, and they had been residing here about six months. Mr. Brill was a stiff-built, low-set man, weather-beaten and grizzly; he was said by the neighbours "to dote on his wife;" whatever that may have been in those days it is an infirmity under which few men labour now. He was ignorant of most things, except a knowledge of fishing and mending nets, and if he were not found from home at one occupation he was sure to be at home at the other! His wife, so he said, knew enough for them both; and it was, so he thought, a blessing that while she read to him the newspaper (which they borrowed when it was almost a week old), he could be working at his nets. Jem Brill was looked upon by those with whom he did business, that was to whom he sold fish, as a man of his word; and if he ever was inclined to go wrong, his wife would set him right; everybody believed that as firmly as Brill himself. Brill was soon led to interest himself in Birkett's children; because his wife oftentimes, when her household duties were fulfilled, would find her way to the apartments of her lodger. She had, too, with all womanly tact, gleaned the history of Mrs. Birkett's life, and had moreover imparted this to her husband.

“ Couldn’t I show that little Harry how to make nets ?” said old Brill to his wife one evening as they were sitting by the kitchen fire, the wind not answering for him to put to sea.

“ Why you old curly wig, you simple, I was going to say stupid old curly wig,” for such were the terms of endearment Mrs. Brill used to her sagacious husband, “ of course you could show Harry or anybody else how to make nets ; but what good would that do ?”

“ Why, it would put his hands to some use, and if a lad can be showed how to use his hands he will be useful, won’t he ? and if he’s useful he will earn something, won’t he, Nelly ? You can’t get over that, little lady fair, can you ?”

Nelly could not, what is further, she did not try, but uttering a merry laugh, and laying down the blue yarn stocking she was darning, she caught hold of her husband’s long curly hair and pulled it with a great show of force, patting him on the cheek, called him a clever old curly wig, and sharp as a fish-hook. What joy this calling of names appeared to create.

Some days after Harry, who was often waylaid in the lobby, or on the stairs, by Mrs. Brill, and who often had thrust into his hand a slice of wheaten bread, well coated with butter, (a sub-

stance which was never seen, except on holidays or festive occasions, at his mother's table) was called into the kitchen to see old Mr. Brill. The net-making business was proposed and accepted. If he were to become expert he might earn shillings, yes, shillings each week ; and if he liked to go out a-fishing now and then, he might earn more.—“More than shillings, Harry,” said Mr. Brill.

Harry did spend many evenings at net-making, and very proud Jem Brill was of his pupil, almost as proud as the pupil was of his work. But as to going a-fishing, Harry was too young, his mother thought, for that. If he earned as much in the evenings as would pay for his schooling at a good master's school, that would be a great matter, and Mrs. Birkett set her son to strive for it.

Harry's father was a mason ; a man of good natural parts, improved by cultivation. His circumstances considered, and the state of learning being borne in mind, he was a well educated man, of free, cheerful disposition, frank manners, and active habits. His memory was good, his reading had been very general, and he had in a peculiar degree that dangerous gift of being a good story-teller. There was moreover a dashing off-hand style about him, whether at his work or amongst his friends and companions, and his trenchant sarcasms, and

humorous sayings, led him to be feared by some as much as he was respected by others. As life opened up to him, friends clustered around, and when John Birkett led to the altar his tall, gentle, tender-hearted and devoted wife, it was agreed on all hands—around the smithy fire, by the church-door when the bell was ringing in, or at the market, where men met to pay earnest money, and damp it with liquor—that no man in the township was more respected than him, and no young couple could have better prospects before them.

There was now a second pier in course of construction at Poebeck, and this gave employment to a large number of masons, many of whom hailed from a distance; amongst these was Harry's father, John Birkett. He had been a thriving master builder in his native county, but through his own misconduct had now become a journeyman mason, and was working at the new pier. He could yet, and did, tell good stories. He still whistled at his work, he still walked sprightly, and had a little swagger in his gait; but it was said his stories were getting stale, his whistling, by which he was recognized amongst dozens of his fellow workmen, was not so blithsome; his manners were less frank and joyous, and the glow of health was fading from his cheek. He had in a few years

undergone a great change. Everybody who had known him in former years and saw him now noticed it,—he felt it. John Birkett was a great favourite with Jem Brill, but Jem had seen very little of him lately.

Brill and his wife had some curious discussions, and the result of these were generally communicated to Mrs. Birkett by her kind landlady. The morning on which this story opens it had been a subject of considerable discussion between them, whether it was stoutness which made people good-tempered, or whether it was good-temper which made people stout. Brill had, as he termed it, coiled the rope up in this way:—

“What matter? Whichever way it is, Nelly, you have it! As I said to our lads in the boat when we had that good haul, and they kept talking away as to how it happened as we got such a boat-load, ‘what’s the use of your talking; whichever way it is we have the fish, and what more do you want? That’s the best end of the line, isn’t it? And I never heard anyone as could get over that!’ ”

Mrs. Brill should rather think not. The man who could surpass her husband in catching fish, or making the most of them when caught, she would like to see him,—that she would.

Bearing on her face the radiant smile occasioned

by her reflections on the convincing style of argument adopted by her husband, she entered Mrs. Birkett's room on the afternoon of the day following the rejoicings at Poebeck, and was surprised to find Mrs. Birkett in tears.

"What! not come home at all? I saw Mrs. Bell running through the passage just now, and I did wonder what was the matter. Well, well," said the little woman.

"Mrs. Bell came running to tell me," sobbed forth the weeping wife, "that John had been paid off at the pier, because he had lost so much time lately, and that yesterday, during the rejoicing, he had taken his tool-box away, and with two or three companions had gone off up the country 'on tramp,' and left me, left me;" her tears choked her utterance.

Mrs. Brill was much affected, and well-nigh overcome; but she recovered herself and replied, "It is no use meeting our troubles half-way, they are not worth it. Don't believe half of what you hear; but whatever you do meet with, or whatever you hear, always hope for the best! That is what I do, and it is what suits me, so that I always feel safe in recommending it to my friends or neighbours. I know it is very sad, very sad; but suppose now that the worst has happened, as you think, why

that may turn out the very best, for what you know? Suppose all is true which you have heard, and that he has done what no one would ever expect; will fretting alter your case now? or, what concerns you more, will it help you to buy bread for your children? No! Cheer yourself up, then. If you let your spirits go down, hope is gone. Never do that. Never do that.

Such was Mrs. Brill's philosophy of life. She uttered the last sentences with great volubility and energy, stamping her foot on the floor, as if to render her words still more effective. Then, turning to the person addressed, and who had sat weeping before her, she said, "Give me the child. I'll take care of it; bless it! and when the others come in from school I'll get them something to eat, and make out a story why you are not here, for it will never do to let the girls know until it can't be helped. But as for you, get away now as soon as ever you can, make all the inquiries you can, and, if possible, get back before our Jem goes out for the night. Jem will advise with us; he is very good at that is Jem. He can mostly get any one out of a scrape but himself! I never saw him puzzled with anything but once; that was the time his sister was bad of the quinsy, and she sent for Jem to give him some directions about a little money which

troubled her. Well, when we reached her bedside she could not speak. Jem was bothered a bit then, to be sure. Else, in a general way, he is very good at managing a difficulty, that he is. Come now, give me baby, Mrs. Birkett, and away with you."

The weeping woman turned towards her friend a pale, careworn, oval face, lighted up by large, lustrous, dark hazel eyes, the arched lashes of which gleamed with tears. She was very plainly clad, and her simple cotton bedgown displayed arms finely moulded, whilst her form and bearing gave many indications that her condition in life had not always been what it was now. She made an effort to speak, to express her gratitude for the kindness and consideration shown her, but her thoughts could find no tongue; the nervous twitching about her mouth, the violent pulsations seen on her temples, the heavy sighs and deep sobs which broke away as she rose and pressed her babe to her bosom—these expressed all she had now to utter. Hesitating, looking first at the kind little woman who chatted away merrily by her side, then at the face of her babe, around the mouth of which the smile of innocence played, as the infant soul, unscathed by worldly conflicts, revelled in the joys of dreamland; next, casting her eyes around the room, and here and there, by the various articles of domestic use,

having the happiness of the past brought before her, she sank again on her seat by the cheerless fire, and her tears flowed fast.

For two hours, ever since she had first heard the evil tidings, she had sat with her babe on her knee, and sorrow gnawing at her heart. She had suffered much, and borne it patiently ; she had been torn from the scenes and friends of her youth ; had come amongst strangers, had struggled with poverty, yet had, up to this time, passed through all without giving any one cause to think that she repined at her lot. But what were all her sorrows compared with this ? She had seen her husband in the hey-day of youth, business prospering, and friends smiling around him. She had seen him, and mourned to see him, when the first step on the slippery path was taken, and she had nobly striven with him to retain the position he was then in danger of losing. And when the efforts which he made to stem the torrent into which he had been whirled all proved futile, and he was ruthlessly cast off from whatever he had hoped to cling to, she was still on the banks to cheer and encourage him, and as he neared the shore stood ready to reach out her helping hand. For his sake, and for the sake of those dear children which God had given them, she had endured all. “And can it be,” thought she, “can

it be that he has learned to love me less as he sees my sufferings more? Oh no, surely not. Even if he could be so overcome as to desert me, surely he would not desert these babes of his." Again and again she heaved violently to and fro, kissing her babe and weeping piteously.

Sitting erect for a moment, and then looking wildly around the room, a thought seemed to flash across her mind which nerved her to action. "What others have done," mused she, "he might be led to do." She had not to muse long, or look far into the past, for many instances had been brought closely home, in which the strongest or the tenderest ties, either or both, had been snapped off or torn asunder, without hesitation or compunction, at the bidding of that evil spirit which "the usages of society" engenders, and which indulgence in drink evokes.

"I do not like to go out without Harry, Mrs. Brill. He knows all the places where his father calls; and knows his way through the town, too, which I do not," faltered forth Mrs. Birkett. "However, if he does not go down to the beach or climb the hills when he leaves school, he will be here soon, and I will get ready by the time he comes home." She passed her infant to Mrs. Brill, and left the room.

Mrs. Brill seemed delighted to dandle babies, and was soon at work chirping, crowing, and singing to amuse Mrs. Birkett's child. After the manner of women, she had a number of questions to ask, and they were all put in that jargon known as "mother's English." "Where's mammy gone, eh ;" — "whose coming home soon, eh ?" — "whose girley pirley is it, then ?" — "who carries it up the hill to get daisy pazies, eh ?" — "who wetted its sweet little cheeks with tears, and forgot to kiss them off, eh ?" All of which were put in rapid succession, the child being tossed about and kissed a good deal the while. It did not answer the questions, although she put them more than once, and put them in a variety of ways. No ! It seemed rather more stolid when she left off than when she began. Eventually it waved its tiny arms, and crowed whilst staring at her, and this charmed the little body so much that she almost suffocated it with kisses.

Harry Birkett bounded in from school, and somewhat checked the ardour of the nurse. His mother called to him from the next room, and on answering he soon saw what a dreary tramp was before him. The mother and her son set out.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT THE NEIGHBOURS THOUGHT OF MRS.
BIRKETT, AND WHO ONE OF THEM WAS.

“To be honest as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.”

It was a murky night, and a thick mist fell, as Mrs. Birkett and her boy left their home in search of “father.” Most of the shops were closed, the market-place was almost deserted, even the fishermen who frequently lingered late to smoke and chat by the Quay-side had moved off, and the streets looked gloomy. All who could keep indoors did so; for pedestrianism by night in Poebeck was difficult at any time, but the difficulties were much increased on such a thick, dark, dank night as this. The town was said to be lighted after the most approved fashion. Small funnel-crowned oil lamps were placed at street corners, in general at a considerable distance apart. The feeble light which these gave forth served but to show just now how thick was the darkness. The pathways or foot-walks were paved, narrow, and uneven; and in

point of cleanliness there was now little to choose between them and the cart roads. Taking his mother by the hand, Harry Birkett thought it best to keep to the centre of the streets, and through mist and mire they trudged on in silence.

Mrs. Birkett since her residence in Poebeck had seldom gone abroad. In daylight the town was a maze to her ; at night, from her experience she was led to look upon it as something worse. The twists, twirls, and bends which the streets took, the curious nooks and "crannies" to which they led, were not to her taste. She could not understand the jostling of people in the busy street, and never cared to try. Brought up in the retirement of rural life, unaccustomed to the excitement of a thriving town, being, moreover, of a retiring disposition, to which had been added by misfortune a deep tinge of melancholy, she shrank from public gaze. She felt her humiliating position, and made it not one whit better by feeling it so acutely.

By her neighbours Mrs. Birkett was looked on as haughty and reserved, and spoken of as proud and sulky. Her increasing family and diminished means involved her in daily struggles to provide food and raiment for the little ones ; and even had she been "gifted" with the inclination, she never could have found time properly to attend to the

affairs of her neighbours and yet not neglect her own. Therefore it was ever likely her conduct would not escape criticism or condemnation. Social tyrannies are found to exist in every grade of life; perhaps the lower in the scale the more grinding and relentless they become.

Who was this Mrs. Birkett? some of the neighbours would like very much to know. Pride was all very well in its place; but when people were poor what would pride do for them? And John Birkett, who or what was he? If he had been better off at one time he was as badly off as any one about now, and his wife was as hard put to it as any one of them before wages day came round. They all knew that; of course they did! Why, then, should Mrs. Birkett keep herself so much aloof? Why call her children in so soon from play, as if there was no one about good enough to be their companions? Why, it had been commonly reported that Mrs. Birkett had beaten her boy for taking a part in a "rum butter feast" with one of his playmates. She wouldn't have her children taking rum in any shape. A great lady, surely! As if a little rum mixed with butter and given to children on the occasion of a christening could do any harm. Wasn't it the custom of the country? Yes, to be sure; but a fine lady like this, what did

she care for customs? They had no patience with such empty pride. A fall it would surely have, and they would see it.

Except to Mrs. Brill, and a few people from her own county, who were now residing in Poebeck, Mrs. Birkett was unknown—that is, her conduct and habits of life were not understood; yet in no wise does the lack of knowledge form a shield against misrepresentation. That she did not meet her husband on wages night, and travel round by shops and the market, calling in at various drinking houses to see friends and treat others, was attributed to her pride, and most truly so. She was willing to suffer the reproach for this, and had to do it. She loathed the thought at any time to go into public-houses, or to hunt after or hang on him who had been at one time, and she hoped might be again, the head of a happy household, ordering all things aright. She believed still that there were moments in the life of her husband when he looked on his conduct with abhorrence, and she never could bring herself to think that by manifesting her want of faith in him, as she must do in the strongest manner, by waiting for him at the pay table, it would have any beneficial effect. True, she did on many and many occasions go forth in search of him when he stayed late and she sus-

pected her assistance might be useful, but she would not wait at the pay table. She appealed to better and higher feelings, which in his sober moments she knew he had; and although her appeals were often vain her faith was ever strong. Her pride and love in this were strangely blended; a pride that would not stoop to disgrace itself; a love which many and very deep waters of affliction could not quench.

One of the inhabitants of Poebeck, who knew Mrs. Birkett in happier days, and one whom she was ever glad to see, was Richard Roper, or, as he was now called, "Old Dick Roper the Ranter." He had for some time past been the time-keeper at the works of Poebeck Pier, and had attached himself to the Primitive Methodists, who were commonly designated "Ranters." To the residence of Dick the Ranter, Harry Birkett now directed his mother's steps.

Roper was a tall, muscular, square-built man, with long, thick, grey, wiry hair, and large features, which, although not regular or finely chiselled, had yet a pleasing expression. His voice was deep and sonorous; his manner of speaking remarkably deliberate and impressive. His grasp of your hand was a matter not to be hastily forgotten, and he never pretended to more sincerity and earnestness

of character than his daily life displayed. He had been brought up at a forge, a steel manufactory, and his honesty and uprightness of life were said to be as true as the metal he had worked in.

This Ranter lived in a classic region of Poebeck—that is if names impart dignity to streets, courts, or alleys. Poets, essayists and historians had here their names, very indifferently painted on the corners of lanes or houses, and in many cases the locality was expressive of many, very many matters which the name would hardly be expected to suggest. The great essayist whose name adorned the corner of the alley where Roper lived might not have felt flattered by the compliment. Yet hearts beat hereabouts, under very commonplace coverings—hearts whose deep love and reverence for things sacred were as sincere, though not so refined, as any spoken of in the pages of the *Spectator*.

As Harry and his mother crossed by the church to reach the alley the sound of singing broke upon them, and then Mrs. Birkett recollected it was the night for Roper's meeting. As they turned into the alley they found the door of Roper's house open, and the house filled with people joining in the devotional exercises. Women and men, most of them in very humble attire, were standing round the room. In the centre was a small round table,

on which stood a very slender candle, placed in the neck of a tall bottle to give it elevation—the polished candlestick which hung over the mantelshelf being probably too low. At the table stood Roper, and as Harry Birkett ascended the step (for the mother thought it best to wait until the end of the meeting before she spoke to Roper), the old man was giving out the verse—

“While they enjoy his heavenly love
Must I in torments dwell ;
And howl, while they sing hymns above,
And blow the flames of hell?”

This sung to what was called “a rattling good tune,” and the singers in the main being terribly in earnest, made Harry look very wildly about him, and cling very closely to the skirts of his mother’s gown. The last two lines were repeated several times, and each time the singing became louder, and the excitement greater, until Roper announced, “Let us go to prayer,” when all kneeled devoutly, and the strong full voice of the old man was heard above the murmurs of all the worshippers, pouring forth in impassioned language a fervent supplication to the Most High. The forcible expressions used, the energetic action, the vivid pictures of a sinner’s state of mind, the utter worthlessness of self-righteousness, “the filthy rags,” the misery of a lost spirit,

the glories of a redeemed saint, these all the boy could think of and talk of in years after, and,

“As he grew in years,
With these impressions would he still compare
All his remembrances, thoughts, shapes, and forms.”

The meeting having been brought to a close, Roper shook the hand of each person present, and quoting some passage of Scripture applicable to the time and circumstances, bid them good-night, charging all as they left the house to “take courage, be faithful to the grace given, and the day’s your own.”

Harry observed that when his mother rose from her knees she had been weeping; and what with the excitement of the scene, the strange feelings which the singing had called forth in his mind, and the circumstances which his mother’s appearance here brought to his remembrance, he would fain have wept himself. Roper’s daughter, a small hunch-backed woman, who kept house for her father, just then came towards the boy, and greeting him very cordially, the tears were checked.

“Well, Jane, my lass,” said Roper, approaching Mrs. Birkett, and looking very tenderly on her. “Thy burthen is not light; thorns and briars are ever strewn across thy path; but greater is He that is for thee, than all that can be against thee. He putteth all his enemies to flight. Thou believes that,

surely," and he shook her trembling hand very heartily.

Roper well knew Mrs. Birkett's errand; he had seen John Birkett an hour after his discharge, had talked to him as to what he had best set about in order to support his family, had warned him of the companions, idle and vicious, who sought to entangle him and draw him from home, and charged him to cut off at once and for ever his besetting sin; he feared all to little purpose. He would not however believe that John Birkett would desert his family; no, he would not believe that. Though when the devil gained the mastery and got his most powerful auxiliary, drink, on his side, it was hard to say what men might not do.

"There is hardly time for them to have got far, even if they have set off," said Roper musing. "They were seen at or near the Bowling-green about five o'clock, and I heard tell of some of their tools being pawned after that. It will perhaps turn out a 'spree,' nothing more. However, as you must very naturally feel uneasy, I'll go with you to the village, where you say they are likely to be; but the lad had better go home, Jane, hadn't he?"

"Oh, no, Richard," said Mrs. Birkett, "don't send Harry home. If we can find father, I have great hopes that Harry will induce him to return;

many a night he has come home, as he said, to please Harry, or for Harry's sake, when my entreaties were apparently of no avail. No ; let Harry come with me ; he is not tired ; I never heard him say so when he was with me. Slim, as you say he is, and weakly, he is sprightly, very ; you'll see how he will walk."

" Well, well, it is no wish of mine to part you," replied Roper ; " but I don't think much, Jane, of a child persuading a man to come home. John may have said he came away on some time or other to please the lad, or on account of the lad, but that was just the devil working in him, and making him to vex thee ! The devil said (eh, lass, what a wary one that devil is !)—the devil said, ' Don't thee go home for her ; don't thee be led by a woman ; don't thee do as Adam did.' That's what the devil said. And then John says to himself, ' I won't go home for her ; I feel, though, that it is quite right I ought to go home ; I, feel, too, that all she says is true and just ; but it will never do to allow her to see that I think so. Well, what's to be done ? Why here is Harry—my son, Harry. Halloa ! Harry my boy, is that you ? I'll go home with you, my boy. Yes, yes, my little man, I'll go home with you.' That's just the way of it : and that is, you may depend upon it, the devil's own way of discoursing. The devil in a man without the drink is bad enough ;

but I've heard it said that drink it was which brought the seven other devils into him!"

"Now Ruth," said the old man, addressing his daughter, I will likely be away a couple of hours; there's 'Grace Abounding' in 'the Kist;' thou can be going over it; and set the supper in the oven if thou goes to bed!"

Roper, with Mrs. Birkett and Harry, made their way quickly out of the town. By the church, down towards the ship-yard, under the large arch, off on to the road where the sea-breeze greeted them, and where the surges sighed on the shore; on by dark lanes, near which lay heaps of mineral waste piled up, past tall chimneys, from which ever and anon lurid flames leaped up, lighting for the moment the scene around. They drew near the shore again, voices were heard, lights were seen tossing to and fro; the wind was rising, fishermen were making fast their boats, glad to find themselves on shore, and anxious to get home. Rain was falling; what a sudden squall was this!

Those who had seen Mrs. Birkett ere she set out—who had noticed her sometimes faltering step and careworn frame, would hardly expect she could weather a storm like this. How bravely she bore on! Roper kept steadily plodding on; the rain might beat, he never winced. "Praise the Lord

Jane," said he, "we are in the path of duty;" and then he would burst out rapturously singing,

"Awhile forget your doubts and fears,
And look beyond this vale of tears
To that celestial Hill !"

"Come, Harry," said he, "thou must begin betimes ; there is a dark path before thee, my lad, but there's light in the valley. Yes, yes, there's light in the valley !"

Harry did not care about singing just now, and he was not quite sure if he understood what the light in the valley meant. He believed Mr. Roper to be a kind good man. His mother had ever told him to look on him as such. He thought, too, that the old man's singing, and his altogether joyous feeling exhibited during the storm, were intended to cheer his mother's drooping heart, and for this the boy looked on the old Ranter with a child's love.

They were now drawing nigh the village. It lay close to the sea, and consisted of one main street, with the houses of fishermen scattered about the beach. There was at one period a considerable trade carried on, but of late Poebeck had drawn most of this within itself, and the little place was more frequently heard of in connexion with rural sports and rustic enjoyments than anything else. An old friend of the Birkett family lived here, to whose

house John frequently found his way, and here Mrs. Birkett hoped to learn something of her husband, it might be meet with him. This was on the route, too, that he was most likely to take if bent on leaving Poebeck.

The storm had now somewhat abated; they were all very wet, but no complaint was heard. Harry leaped for joy as he saw the lights from the houses, indicating that rest and shelter would soon be afforded. As they turned down sharply on the village, the running of men to and fro, the moving of a lantern rapidly about, the short command given sharply, with the cry of a woman "Oh! men, do for God sake be quick," startled the weary travellers.

"Lo! on dangers, deaths and snares,
I every moment tread,"

said old Roper. "But, Jane, be faithful, my lass; come on, Harry, quick, quick, this way. Bless us all, whoever is this?"

CHAPTER IV.

A SURPRISE AND CAPTURE.

“Measure not men by Sundays, without regarding what they do all the week after.”

MRS. BIRKETT stood much in need of all the consolation which Roper could afford, as wet, weary, and footsore, she approached the crowd which the screams and cries of a female had attracted. The kind old man knew this. He did not walk by her side for the last three miles without marking and pondering over the deep sighs which escaped her. A close insight into, or a profound and philosophic acquaintance with, the workings of the human mind, the old Ranter had not ; he made no pretence to have this. He had, however, noticed the passions, various in character and degree, by which men were frequently swayed. In his mode of expressing it, he knew from experience what a cage of unclean birds man's heart was likely to become if man rested solely on his own power, and suffered the evil suggestions of his nature to control his life and conduct. He had noticed, too, what deep feeling and affection there is in woman's heart, how tenaciously it clings to its object, yet how often this is lost sight of,

crushed out, or overlain by the inconsideration and selfishness of man. In his humble walk of life these matters were often forced upon him, and in no instance was all so clearly brought home as in that of his old neighbours, the Birkett family.

Roper had a very simple, yet very expressive, way of uttering striking and solemn truths. Life to him was a stern reality; sin to him a monster which he had hourly to contend against. Of man's depravity and utter selfishness, as he said, "Every day I live, I feel the one, and am compelled, painfully, to witness the other." He was no self-styled philosopher; even the mode of expression adopted by that philosophy which vaunteth itself he could not understand. John Bunyan's "Life of Mr. Badman" he had read frequently. The Bible he read daily, and the more he read the better he liked it, and the clearer shone the sacred word. The reproofs which he would sometimes give to profane swearers, and his constant efforts, as he termed them, to maintain the good fight, and bear above him at all times the standard of his Commander, led many to sneer at his profession: but this never moved him. To a very subtle man, who worked at the pier and read Volney, and who had on many occasions attacked Roper for his lack of philosophic knowledge, the old man one day

replied, "No, no; thank God I do indeed know, as thou says, very little of philosophy. Stark naked facts stare me in the face every day, and what with thinking of them, praying for all around me, and striving to keep my feet from falling, I have quite enough to do and think of. Volney did not, in all probability, act as a time-keeper! He had not a sickly and deformed child at home, a wife in the grave, two sons ploughing the deep, and one at home wallowing in the mire of sin! No! he was, I dare say, a learned man; but like many learned men he did, according to the account thou gives, know more of many things than he did about what concerned him most, the deceitfulness of his own heart."

The constant watchfulness and sober-mindedness displayed by Roper was often, even by his enemies, admired. As he said, no earthly joy could lift him off his feet, no earthly sorrow made him bow to the dust. In joy or sorrow his spirits seemed much the same, and with an earnest desire to do his duty, or what he religiously believed to be such, he met the frowns of the world, its trials and crosses, as become a man, not thinking himself great in so doing, but giving thanks that he was able to bear the burthen. There was, therefore, no expression of terror on his face, his step never faltered when the crowd gave way a little, and a man was borne off to the nearest

public-house, his face cut, and his clothes soiled with mire and blood.

“Here, here!” shouted one of the villagers, who had assisted to rescue the man from the beck-side, down which he had fallen; “here is his tool-box! this was lying beside him, and from his clothes I should think he is a mason, and the tools belong to him.”

Mrs. Birkett rushed forward at the words “he is a mason,” and snatching a lantern from the hand of a fisherman, brought the light to bear on the box lid. “Thank God!” said she, “thankful, indeed, I am, it is not my husband’s box! Oh, Mr. Roper, is not this merciful?”

“Why, why,” said Roper, “bless us all; goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our life. I told thee, Jane, to be faithful; bless us all.”

The old man turned round sharply to look for Harry; he was nowhere to be seen. Not wishing to alarm Mrs. Birkett, whose fears had been somewhat allayed, and whose joy was finding an utterance in tears, he turned back a little, but could see nothing of the boy; he was proceeding to make enquiries from the bystanders, when Harry came running up.

“Where’s my mother, Mr. Roper? Oh! here she is. Mother, I ran after the man that the

people carried into the little public-house," said the boy, "and who do you think it is? Why Dent! The big man that my Father calls Anak's son! The woman says he is very badly hurt, and that she saw him in the town before it was dark, and two more masons with him. I asked her if she could tell me where the other men were, but she could not."

"Bless the boy!" said Mrs. Birkett: "don't run away from us, Harry. It is very dark. We will be losing you next."

Old Roper knew the family where Mrs. Birkett wished to go. He had visited them often. One of his grandchildren had the hooping-cough a short time before, and it had been taken through the tunnel where the tramway ran, which was in those days considered and generally looked upon by the humbler classes as a certain remedy for hooping-cough! The tunnel was not far from the village where they now were, and when children were taken through the tunnel they were not unfrequently taken further on, to the village. On the last occasion of Roper's visit to Wilson's cottage, John Birkett, his "outward conduct," the failing of his wife's health, and the painful circumstances of the family, had formed the subject of conversation. Roper well knew that a kind reception there

awaited Mrs. Birkett, and they made for the house. It lay a little off the road, on a grassy knoll, which commanded a fine view of the sea, the piers of Poebeck, the "pits" above it, the headland beyond; and, on a clear day, far away to the west could be seen the high hills and verdant slopes of a fair island, the history of which island Harry's father had again and again recounted to him in the happy days when they rambled together, before John Birkett came to Poebeck, before he gave way to leaving his home in the evening, and leaving his wife and children to pass the time as they best could.

At ordinary times this little fishing village, at this hour of night, would have been dark and silent. Dark enough it was; but the commotion consequent upon finding the man who had rolled from the road into "the beck" had created a stir. Both public-houses were generally open late. There was considerable rivalry between them. At one, the shoemaker, a red-haired man, with a wooden leg, and a great fund of stories, was a nightly visitor. His loquacity was only exceeded by his indifference to truth. Anything, no matter what, any other person may have read about, this man had seen! So he would declare. He had lost his leg at the siege of Badajos, and yet would stoutly declare that he had fought at Waterloo. He had, according to

his own account, been one of those who were rescued from the black hole of Calcutta, and had afterwards been taken prisoner by the Moors in Spain! He exercised some discrimination in the selection of his stories, and made them in general to suit the temper and intelligence of his auditors, so far as he could judge. He looked cautiously around him, and scanned the company closely before he ventured out of his depth, and the manner in which he would allay doubts as to the probability of a story had been copied doubtless from a high authority. He descended to particulars. The smallest matter was not too small for him to notice. Instead of saying, "It was afternoon when the command was given to advance," he would relate it in this wise: "I had just filled my pipe, and was sitting on the grass chatting away to Bill Swankey. Bill came oft Morton way, and we had known each other from infancy. 'Bill,' says I, 'I wonder what Polly Binns thinks about us, now;' she was a nice girl was Polly, and Bill and I used to go nutting with her. Just then the bugle sounded; up I jumps, pulls out my watch; it was half-past two o'clock, or it might have been twenty-five minutes to three, for my watch wanted cleaning, and had not gone very well since the bullet went through it! 'Halloa,' says I, 'we will have an

early tea some of us to-day, for the grey devils are driving down on us !”

Explicit statements of this sort set all doubts at rest, and so famed had the fighting shoemaker become, that it was more than hinted by the neighbours that the stout old widow who kept the house had secured the services of the story-teller by giving him his drink free.

At the Dolphin, the other public-house, two Chelsea pensioners were now located, and had been for some time. It was said their stories were not so good as the shoemaker's, and it was a subject of remark that they did not draw so many customers as the wooden-legged man. Then as “ the ale was no great things,” and the spirits were said to be “ worse than ought ” at both places, what appeared the only sources of attraction to the houses at all, in the eyes of some men, was the company, the sociality, the story-telling. Books were scant, newspapers were dear, and, consequently, scant too. These story-tellers at the public-house kitchen were said to furnish recreation for the people during the long evenings ; what was heard here was sometimes believed and retailed, hence the wonderful historical narratives which may even yet be listened to in remote corners of the land.

John Birkett, with two of his companions, had

made his way out of Poebeck in the evening, and had reached the Dolphin, where the pensioners were discussing the character of the Allied Troops during the Peninsular War. One contending that they were, in the main, "wastrels," only fit to be shot, or, if allowed to remain on earth, ought to be subjected to continual bondage. The other maintained that they were as good fighters as the British, but they could not move with such precision or rapidity.

The wordy conflict waxed warm when John Birkett set down his box and called for a pint of ale. He was soon engaged on the side of the British. He had read with tolerable care the history of the Peninsular War, had a high opinion of the Duke of Wellington, which these men, although they had gone through the whole campaign, had not. On many subjects views are considerably modified, if not changed, by closer observation. Wellington was no hero to them, his generalship was called into question, his discipline denounced. As the argument became warmer, the ale was called for more freely, and high words ensued. Birkett and his companions were likely to obtain the best of the argument, but for peace sake were rather unceremoniously thrust from the house.

Drink had now got a fair hold on John Birkett.

He thought as a matter of course that he was a deeply injured man,—that society dealt unjustly with her most worthy sons, or he would not be in his present position. Men with not half the brains—no, nor half the education,—were in situations where they might in years realise fortunes, and here he was actually turned out of a paltry village inn by a couple of scarecrow pensioners! He had left his home, his family, what was he to do?

Amidst thoughts which puff up and inflate a man, and which are so peculiar to the early stages of a drunkard's life, there were others which could not be kept down. In this village he had a friend who, were he as he ought to be, would be glad to see him—would be glad to shelter him from the storm. But he could not go to Wilson's. No! neither would he return home. To do the first would be to expose himself more than ever to the reproofs of a very kind old friend. To do the second would expose him to the ridicule of his fellow-workmen in Poebeck. The resolution to leave home at all, had been come to more in a spirit of bravado than anything else; and, further, it was the worst of all bravado—that produced by drink, and drawn from a man by his drunken companions. Birkett was in that state of mind now as almost to wish for some excuse to return home. *He would like to do right, but he*

must have some proper apology for doing so ! It was manly and courageous to neglect his employment, sacrifice his work, brave the trials of a tramping life ! To be sure it was ! Had he not sung a song on the glories of tramping ?

“ With my tool-box o’er my shoulder,
And my blackthorn in my hand ;
Then o’er the hills we go, my boys,
Like roving journeymen ! ”

His companions, on leaving the Dolphin, staggered about the streets, shouting and singing ; and John, after musing a little, and finding he had some trifle of money still left, seeing the door of the Crown open, stumbled in, and here his better thoughts were soon stifled. The red-haired shoemaker was an old familiar face. He had been met with at Poebeck. In story-telling they had been pitted against each other : but Birkett in every case had to yield to the wooden-legged warrior, on the score of “ garnishing.” Birkett’s stories were very probable, very laughable, very humorous ; but the warrior’s were very circumstantial, very full, very exciting, and very wonderful. Birkett had no chance with such an antagonist.

Mrs. Birkett and her son, together with old Roper, after having had some refreshment, came down the village, with Mr. Wilson, in search of

John Birkett. They called in at the Dolphin. Dent, the man who had fallen and injured himself, had been put to bed, and there had been a messenger despatched for the doctor. Dent was sobered somewhat, and could tell them where he left Birkett. On hearing this they set off to the Crown, and as Roper entered, Birkett was, much to the amusement of the company, giving a description of a rustic dance in his native village, illustrating his narrative by a jig and a few steps of a hornpipe.

“Well, John, John,” said Roper, “thou art losing thyself sadly. I never expected to see thee make such a fool of thyself. To think of a man like thee, as might become a blessing to thy family and all around thee, making a Tom Noddy of thyself to please rabble like this.”

The old Ranter scowled on all around. John Birkett had taken too much drink to feel ashamed, and respected the old man too much to become impertinent; therefore, making a show of good humour, he stopped in the midst of his dance and walked forward, offering his hand to Roper.

“Nay, nay, John, I’ll have no shaking of hands with thee until I see thee shake hands, ay, and join heart, too, with some one else! Thou art a child of many prayers, John—and it is sad to see thee striving against thy best feelings. Come away!”

The old man was moving off. John hesitated. The red-haired storyteller looked at John, saying, "So your captain is the old Ranter parson, is it? Well! well! there are, I suppose, fools of all sorts!"

"Come away, John, come away, man, don't dally with the tempter," called out Roper.

On turning round hastily to leave the room John Birkett stood before his weeping wife. Harry ran to him—"Oh! father, we have had such a walk to find you, and mother, I am sure, is very tired," said the boy.

John Birkett could make no reply.

CHAPTER V.

FATHER AT HOME AGAIN.

"The first sure symptom of a mind in health,
Is rest of heart, and pleasure felt at home."

JOHN BIRKETT was glad to have the opportunity of returning home; but there was little outward manifestation of this. Roper had no doubt whatever (as he had expressed himself to Mrs. Birkett) that John might resume his employment at the pier, if he could be prevailed upon, or if he would so far control himself as to give up the habit of drinking. He was a good workman, expert, hard-working, and skilful; and he knew this. He prided himself on his work, was inclined to boast of it at the beer-table; heard men speak in high terms of his ability, and rather liked to hear such remarks. This begat what he looked upon as "an independent spirit," and what is called so by many men to this day.

This so-called independent spirit led him not

unfrequently to treat with the most perfect indifference the wishes or directions of those whom he had undertaken to serve. It might be that he knew his work well; yes, perhaps better than some placed in authority over him. Then why should he submit to be dictated to, he wanted to know. Often asked the question of himself, and when surrounded by "jovial mortals" asked them to little purpose. Foolish man, with many fellows! How vain it is to ask the question with the glass in the hand! Men talking with spirited or "beery" eloquence of the rights of labour—its dignity; yet, whilst in the very act of talking, they are fatally neglecting its duties! Had John Birkett been as careful to discharge the one as he was boastingly to talk of the other, he would have placed himself in the only true path rightly to obtain what he could now only talk of. With his ability, promotion would have been certain, and instead of having, as he considered, to submit to dictation, he might have been a dictator himself! But he could not in the matter of drink control himself, and did not like in the matter of work to be controlled by another. It "cut him to the quick," he had been heard to say; yet he, who on many subjects displayed good sense, on this point displayed great weakness. He felt that he ought to be in a better

position, yet was not content to undergo the trials and labour in order to reach it. Nay, so far from this, the feelings which such a spirit engendered threw more obstacles in his way than anything else. Knowing what a delightful prospect there is to be obtained from the summit of a mountain is not alone sufficient to take a man up; he must climb. And very often the more perilous the ascent, the harder the climb, the more the prospect is enjoyed, and most certainly the better it is remembered. Birkett wished to be up, but would not climb.

Roper and John Birkett walked home together. Harry and his mother followed. There was not much talk, except between the two men, and this was chiefly on the proposal of Roper that John Birkett should, in the morning, go to the foreman of the masons and ask to be taken on. This gave rise to an animated discussion. Birkett could not brook this. He was not drunk; he had gone just so far as to have imbibed a good deal of "the independent spirit," which would not allow him to say he was sorry for his conduct, wished to amend, and only now wanted the opportunity to enable him to display the sincerity of his desire. When did the independent spirit ever permit a man to be so honest? Yet it is hard to see what meaning words

can have if there be such a feeling as independence without honesty.

Roper took this view. He could see very little independence in the fact of a man losing time and spending money by carousing in ale-houses, thus often disgracing himself in the eyes of his fellows, degrading himself and family, plunging himself in debt, and his family in domestic and social misery, leaving wife and children to the tender mercies and considerate care of poor people who, in the main, had enough to do to take care of themselves. As the old Ranter said, with great warmth, "Why, John, if that's thy independence, or if that is all it will do for thee, for thy own sake, my lad, get rid of it altogether. I have heard men say they were independent, and were determined to be independent, when they were, to my mind, downright impudent; yes, impudent, and nought else. Thou shouldn't talk much about independence until thou has done thy duty faithfully in that station of life to which it has pleased the Lord thy God to call thee, and that thou never can say to me thou hast done. Nay, John, the drink may make thee fancy thyself a fine fellow; but as thou likes proverbs, I'll give thee one, ' Handsome is as handsome does,' my lad."

Birkett was about to resent this home-thrust, but

the old man was too expert for him just now. "Don't, John," said he, "don't let the devil have the mastery; put a bridle on thy tongue to-night and I'll listen to thee some other time; it will not be John Birkett that will speak now, it will only be the devil that is in him. I like to hear thee talk well enough, I've listened to thee with pleasure many a time—but as for that unclean spirit which thou hast given way to and allows to ride roughshod over thy better trimmed self, why, to speak plainly, I don't heed what he says. He was a liar from the beginning, and he mends none—not him."

Before they parted for the night Roper whispered a few words to Mrs. Birkett, patted Harry on the head, and then turning to John, said, "Now, I'll expect to see thee to-morrow, and just take this home with thee. If thou gives way to the independence thou talks about, and it does for thee what it has done for others, thou'll soon have to be independent of thy wife! Jane is going down hill fast, very fast. A walk like this is enough to finish the woman. She was given to thee graciously, nay, I saw thee take her from her father's house, and right proud thou did look of her that morning; and will it ever be said that John Birkett neglected, nay, deserted the wife of his youth—the pride of his house? God forbid, John! God forbid! I'll

pray for thee, John. Good-night, Jane ! be faithful my lass."

The stern old man turned off to reach his lonely home, leaving one heart beating with fervent gratitude, and another stung intensely by his faithful admonition.

When the Birketts reached home, Mr. and Mrs. Brill were both in the room. The child had been very cross, and Mr. Brill did not like the look of the night, therefore stayed at home "to help Nelly." There was very little said. Mrs. Brill had the sagacity to see that, under the circumstances, the sooner all were left to themselves the better, although she did manage to get out of Mrs. Birkett where she had been, where and how she found John, and what a kind good man Roper was. All of which Mr. Brill listened to in a very few minutes after.

The words of Roper with reference to Mrs. Birkett's health made a deep impression on the mind of Harry. It was not that he understood their full meaning (the old Ranter made many allusions which the boy failed to perceive) ; but in this case he knew so much of what was intended that he could not forget it. He watched his mother very closely when she came into the room to take away the candle after he was in bed. He saw that

her eyes were moist, and he felt how cold her lips were as she impressed them on his with a kind "Good-night, Harry." He was very tired, quite weary, yet he could not sleep. If a doze came on, he found himself as he thought stumbling along the dark road, and as his mother pressed his hand more firmly to prevent him falling, he would start up from the reverie to find the words of Roper ringing in his ears, "Jane is going down the hill fast, very fast."

"Suppose, then," mused Harry, "Mr. Roper means mother is not well, or she will be taken away from us—will die. What will we do? What can I work at? Where will my sisters go? My father is not much at home with us now; will he stop with us, play with us, teach us to read and do sums, as he once did a long while ago? Oh, but Mother will not go! She will be better! We will all be well off again! We will be in a better house, too."

Sleep the boy could not. What a dreary night that was. All the scenes of his short life moved rapidly before him. In all, mother was the principal figure. Now she was sitting with him by the cottage door, and telling him of the great labour she and her eldest brother had to plant the rose-tree by which they were then overshadowed. Then he would be with her in the church, sitting on the

low stool, and if he dared to stir her eye detected his slightest motion, and gently chided him. Then he was with her by the river, looking at the fishermen drawing the salmon nets. What excitement there was as the fish, struggling to regain their liberty, were being drawn to land; how they startled him when they leaped and flapped and bruised themselves on the boat. Then he was passing through the woods with mother, and she would go into the thicket and bring out for him a dock-leaf filled with wild raspberries, and show him where to look for the bilberry; tell him the habits of birds, and teach him to distinguish their different songs, which he was so fond of listening to. Then they would get out on the rough hill-side; down beneath them were variegated fields and slopes feathered with hazel trees; and far away beyond, the sea, and the old abbey lands being laved by it. Here, under the shadow of a large clump of firs, the bible story-book would be read to him, and she would show him the pictures. What big heads, large beards, and curious dresses all the people had in the book; how very friendly they seemed with all sorts of animals; what large flowers grew in those parts, so large that a rose often concealed the body of a man; it was a wonderful picture-book. Yes, and he heard his mother say,—“This was given to me on my birth-

day, Harry, and if you are a good boy, it shall be yours some birthday soon." So the night passed on; the boy in a dreamy state dozed the time away.

Deep sleep at length fell upon him, and it was late next day when his mother called him up; he thought she spoke very cheerful; he thought she looked very pleasant; his father had gone out; two of his sisters were at school, and one was nursing, whilst mother busied herself about the house. Mrs. Brill coming in, Harry learned by this means that his father had been heard to express regret that he had so far forgotten himself as to be led away by Dent. The words of Roper, too, had sank into his heart; oh, how they stung him! To think that he should be reproached by Roper, that he should put it into any one's power to charge him with deserting his wife. Yes, and then to think that Wilsons should know, the very people whom, above all others, he was desirous of showing a good side to; people who were in frequent correspondence with his relatives in his native village. Drink had obtained considerable power over him, but it had not yet succeeded in crushing out *all* self-respect, or that pride of heart which is often called by such a name. No; neither should it. He would let the world see that he had as good a resolution

as any other man; that he could take a glass of ale and leave it alone if he liked. Oh, yes, he was in great moral strength this morning; he, under the gentle chiding from his wife, and the stinging remarks of Roper, felt himself bristling with resolutions to do great deeds. Poor John! this was a state of mind he often experienced. He knew very well what was good for him, what was best for him or his family—to be sure he did; he would do it too. Yes, he had within himself strength enough to accomplish all; yet *something* prevented him carrying these grand resolves out—that was all. Yes, that was all!

Birkett, much to the joy of his wife and her friends, resumed his employment at the pier. The diving-bell was then in operation, and he had frequently to go down in it; and so interested did he become in the curious physical laws which this mode of stone-laying brought before him, that for several weeks no sign of his old habit returned. He was very serious, and his evenings were spent in the instruction of his children. This was, when sober, his habit. Not one of his girls had ever much money spent on their education. Reading, writing and arithmetic, he taught them fairly; and what with tasks during the day, mother's help, and his close examination during the evenings, he pro-

duced tolerable scholars for those days. Fearing that the girls would lose what they had obtained, Mrs. Birkett, when her husband was in a drinking humour, got them off to a free school, or a school which was so cheap it might be said to be almost free. For in Poebeck, much as some people were given to sneer at it for "a smoky coal-hole," the more wealthy citizens had set on foot several institutions of a philanthropic and benevolent character, of which, even in these present days of unbounded wealth, enlightened zeal, and remarkable munificence, the little town of Poebeck need not be ashamed, but ought to feel in every way proud of. All honour to them! Be it the result of coals or tobacco there it is, and long may its influence be felt.

Harry Birkett, to use his father's expression, was getting above his hands. The boy read with great avidity, could not write much, did not care about that, but was fond of "doing sums." Birkett's trade—the measurement it involved (because the masons worked by piece, the stones being hewn at so much per foot)—led to his frequently setting to work and reckoning up what he would be likely to earn, supposing certain stones which he had been engaged on were wrought, checked and passed by the inspector. Hence the boy, having obtained a

tolerable knowledge of the first rules of arithmetic, would stand by the table eagerly watching his father, and thus “picked up a notion of cross multiplication—and square root.” Then he was continually asking questions. “What” and “Why” father said were never out of his mouth. “It’s of no use,” said Birkett one evening to his wife, “Harry must go to a master’s school. He would soon go further than I can pretend to take him. I wish you would make inquiries respecting a master, a strict man, he must be that.”

Mrs. Birkett was delighted to hear her husband speak thus. She had often wished Harry to be placed at a good school, and had intended, if by no other means it could be schemed, that his own earnings should go towards his education. He had been occasionally—“off an’ on”—at the old woman’s school. Here the mistress used to send him for snuff to the market-place, get the boys in turn to do little odd jobs of household work, and in return she very considerately gave them holiday at high-water; and when the bathing season was on she was most liberal in her allowance of time for bathing on “the little sands” or “the beach.” If the children had not much opportunity of strengthening the mind, they had many chances of invigorating the body, and the games of skill and deeds

of daring entered upon at these seasons had much to do with the formation of character and with the practice of self-reliance. Matters not in any sense to be slighted, or lightly esteemed.

No one was so likely to assist Mrs. Birkett in the choice of a master for her son as Mrs. Brill. Accordingly, she was consulted. "You know many people in town, Mrs. Brill, I dare say," said Mrs. Birkett.

"Well, I do," said that little body; "and if I don't know everybody in town and out, I think Jem does. Do you know, if I take a walk with him to the pier and back, or up to his sister's, at the Cransty Brow, where the water comes from, I declare my head aches, yes, and my neck is stiff, and my cough sets in and keeps on for some time after, just with nodding to people that Jem knows. He is very sharp at seeing people. As he says, if he does have a little cast in his eye—or, as I say, squint wickedly—why, there may be some advantage in that; for my mother used to say of him, 'He is a sharp one, is he; one eye in the pot, and the other up the chimney; no one will beat him.' I really do think he sees all sides of him at the same time. 'Now, Nelly,' he says, 'don't be stiff, there's an old matey. Nod to him; he's looking at you.' Then, 'Come, Nelly, dip your flag, my

hearty; there is a real old friend a-coming down on us.' Oh, he is queer one is he!"

Mrs. Brill took the first opportunity of speaking with her husband respecting the schoolmaster. Did he know of anyone?

"Well, Nelly, as you know," began old Brill, "I am no scholar, myself. I never heard of such a thing as school where I was brought up, But times are altering; and I think the time has come for a good look-out to be kept, when women set themselves up to preach."

"Why, Jem," Mrs. Brill hastily interposed, "whatever are you thinking of? I ask you about a schoolmaster for Harry Birkett, and you begin talking about women preaching. I took you to hear Mrs. Jackson, at the Ranters' chapel, and you were nettled a bit at the colliers singing one of your sea-song tunes."

"No, no, Nelly—starboard your helm, I'm on the right tack, leave me to it, and heave to a while. It's time for lads to be looked after when women set themselves up so high; that's the rope I wanted you to lay hold of. As for Harry Birkett, I was sorry to see a lad like that a swallowing the yarns that some of those people spun, and had made up my mind then to see about getting him a better berth. There is only one man in this port

that I would trust a child of my own to, Nelly (he really did squint fearfully as he said this), that is, if I had one; and that is the man to send Harry Birkett to." Brill warmed considerably as he spoke. "Look ye here," he said, "We hear most of all the schoolmasters talk down by the pier, and we know very well what sort of fish they like best; there's a good deal in that to my mind; but of all the men that ever I knew—of all the schoolmasters that ever carried away odd fish on a bit of stick—of all the men that ever reckoned up my boat-load—of all the men that ever wore knee-breeches and knew how many sorts of potatoes grew in Ireland, and how cheap eggs were there—why that little Garry, the little chap that wears sometimes a red shirt and no stockings for a change,—him that came last—that's the man; his figurehead shows what he is. Why his school they tell me is the talk of the town. Garry it is, Nelly—Garry it is!"

"But John Birkett must see him, Brill. Now, if I go upstairs to see if John has come home, could you go and bring this little Garry, as you call him?"

"Could I?" roared Brill, considerably excited. "Why, I can bring him here in the twirling of a tiller bolt." And the old fisherman went out, leaving his wife laughing heartily at his enthusiasm.

CHAPTER VI.

HARRY'S SCHOOLMASTER.

“His style shows the man.”

MR. BRILL did not return with the schoolmaster so speedily as his good wife anticipated. Mr. Garry had been out to tea, or, as he put it to Mr. Brill, when apologising for having detained him, he had been to visit one of his pupils, “at least the parents of one of them.” He was very particular on this point, considering that the more he knew of the parents, their habits of life and circumstances, the better he could discharge his duty to the boy.

“To call in and merely report as to the pupil’s progress would be a most unsatisfactory mode of discharging an important duty,” said the schoolmaster. “Why, my dear sir, what knowledge of the parents could I obtain? What insight into their character? The right side of either man or woman, girl or boy, is, as I take it, to be seen only at meal times! The table is what shows the man! The way in which things are put on shows the woman!—and the manner in which things go off

shows what man, woman, and children are made of! Then there is something social and cheering in meeting with your pupils under such circumstances. You gain a moral power over them by such means. I have ever made it part of my duty to take occasional meals with my pupils, and have, I think, been rewarded for the inconvenience to which I have had occasionally to submit in consequence."

"That may be all right," said Brill; "I can't talk to men like you; but the lad's parents that I have come to you about, have hard work to get meat for themselves, and I don't think you can tell much about them by the dinners they'll give you. If it is part of the bargain for you to have your meat with the people now and then, why be it so; I only know this, if so be that you expect good living or strong grog at John Birkett's, why, I think you will not get it, that's all."

"Pardon me, my dear sir," said Garry—"you must be labouring under some wrong impression respecting the statement I made. You surely do not mean —"

Brill stopped him. "Oh, no, I don't mean anything, only what I say, Mr. Garry. You say you judge of the ship by the way it's 'found.' If it's not found well, that is, if the stores are not good, if there's not plenty of 'em—why it's not a good

ship! The captain's no good—the crew's worse. Well, you may be right, but I don't coil the rope in that way. However, it's no use us talking here; come with me to my Nelly—now Nelly can talk—she can."

The schoolmaster did not look pleased; yet as they turned to leave the house he again apologised to Mr. Brill for having detained him so long from "What I ever must look upon as the most highly honoured occupation—the making of fish nets and the catching and dealing in fish; inasmuch as it had the marked and special approval of the Great Founder of Christianity Himself, and was the favourite pursuit of several of the apostles."

This was said in a tone and manner intended to win upon Brill, who seemed either annoyed with waiting so long, or not pleased at the provision clause which had been alluded to. "Yes," said the old man, "I have heard that the same hand that fed five thousand people in the Wilderness on bread and fish made a pulpit of a fishing boat once over. As for the apostles, I don't know much about them. Nelly reads to me about them, but, so far as I can recollect, they were no great hands at fishing. They did get a good haul once, when they cast the net on the right side of the boat. For my own part I don't do much in netting now. I have gone

into the deep-sea and line fishing; but when I did use nets, why I always cast the net on the right side, for I always got the fish. So I couldn't be far wrong."

"Well done! well done! excellent, my dear sir!" said the schoolmaster, laughing and drawing out his snuff-pouch. Mr. Brill saw nothing in what he had said to call forth laughter, but as they just now reached his door, he said, "Here we are; this is our little berth and the skipper will be in the cabin waiting for us, I'll be bound." They both entered the house.

Mrs. Brill's little parlour was, as "Jem" said, "a regular baby-house." The furniture was very old-fashioned, and there was rather too much of it for the place. A corner cupboard, with ornamental gilt top and pearl keyhole, under it a small oval "snap table," by the side of this Jem's arm-chair, opposite to it his wife's. Large, high-backed chairs were ranged round the room, and in the centre stood a table "with no end of legs." This could be made square, oblong, oval, round, or, as Jem said, "A'most anything to suit the crew as wanted to mess off it!" Everything was scrupulously clean, and the high mantelshelf was furnished with two tall brass candlesticks, a brightly polished box smoothing iron, "the tallying iron," several bottles

of salt, with flowers cut from furniture chintz neatly inlaid, iron dogs, china greyhounds, Milton, from the "Mug Works," and a spotted cat in plaster, were amongst the most conspicuous objects. "The Fisherman's Return," and "Smugglers Looking Out," rudely coloured and varnished, between which hung a print of "Death and the Lady," formed the only specimens of fine art of which Mr. Brill's parlour could boast.

"Here we are at last," said Brill; "tumble in Mr. Garry."

Mrs. Brill rose from her sewing, and the schoolmaster, removing his hat with extreme politeness, and making his best bow, said,

"Mrs. Brill, I presume."

The old fisherman, in his joy to reach home again and bring the schoolmaster, had forgotten to introduce his wife, but, as she said, that was "Just like him." Hearing that Garry thus introduced himself, Brill replied,

"Yes, Mrs. Brill it is; at least all that is left of her; she used to carry a deal more sail than she does now; but since she has set her head to windward, and gone to hear women preach and sing sea songs, why she has had to take in a reef or two!" The old man looked very pleasantly at his wife as he said this. "But come along, heave to, and let

go your anchor, Mr. Garry; never mind the preaching women; Nelly is going to take a turn at that herself, then you must come and hear her. Now Nelly, my lass, clear the decks," said Jem, raising her sewing in his hand, as if he was about to throw it in the street.

Mrs. Brill shook hands with Mr. Garry, but was very sedate, a most unusual condition for her; even the very pleasant and smart sally of her husband did nothing more than draw a faint smile from her. She looked very earnestly at Mr. Garry, and that gentleman never took his eyes off her.

"Oh! yes! ah! I see. Yes, yes; very good. Your good lady is favourable to those joyous Christians on the Mount, I presume," said Mr. Garry, addressing Brill. "Well, 'I have been there and still would go;' but, perhaps, it might be considered somewhat profane in me to go further into the poetical extract, or to apply it to the assemblies. There never was any good done or attempted to be done, but what the work was evil spoken at; some sneer at the Ranters—for my part I have seen too much of the world and its ways to sneer at or speak ill of any body or thing; and when a man comes to devote a great portion of a long life to the study of human character, and the development of man's better part, when, too, in order to do this he finds

himself continually handling—yes, if I may be allowed so to express myself, handling—moral truths and for ever dealing in moral precepts, it is but likely that he will be led to respect that which he so deals in and may be said to live upon.”

Mrs. Brill looked uneasy ; she did not like Mr. Garry's appearance, and she could even, as she said after, in her poor way, have replied to his talk. It was very unusual for her to be silent, but on this occasion she was so, not having had any opportunity of talking to her husband as to what he really knew of Garry.

Just then Harry Birkett knocked at the door, saying, “Please, Mr. Brill, father has sent me to see if the schoolmaster has come.”

“There's the lad himself,” said Brill to Mr. Garry ; “there's the lad that we want you to teach the ropes. If you give him a halfpenny for himself he buys a little book ; and before you can take a turn he says, ‘I can say my book all off.’ He went out fishing with me one night ; it was a very dirty night. There was a nasty roll on, and he was sick. I gave him the mackerel lines to hold, and he was to sing out when he got a bite ; but he could not stick up no how. At last one of the chaps got to talking with him about little story books. Well, if he didn't set to and tell off all the books he had

been reading, and we heard no more of his sickness. 'Here's another tug, Mr. Brill,' says he, and away he goes at his stories again. Come in, Harry. You don't like fishing, do you? You would rather tell about little Jack and his grandfather, wouldn't you? Come forad, my hearty."}]

Harry went towards Mr. Brill; and when he saw the face of his future schoolmaster he hardly knew how to look or what to say. To him the face was very familiar. He had seen it in all sorts of places, and had compared it in his own mind to all sorts of things, animate and inanimate. He had sat on the bulwarks and seen that face before him on the sands below. The boy was fond of what he had heard his mother speak of, "reading faces." There were faces he could read many ways, according to the times and circumstances in which he saw them. This old face always told the same story to Harry Birkett. What a story that was!

"Ah," said Mr. Garry, "an active boy, memory good, temperament bilious, will have to be worked hard. Well, we will see his father." Mr. Birkett was called down. There was a long talk; the result was, Harry was to go to Mr. Garry's school for a month on trial; the terms were arranged, and Mr. Brill agreed to find books, or at least "my Nelly will," said he.

John Birkett, being steady now, was well aware of the important step which had been taken with reference to his son. He was not very favourably impressed with Mr. Garry's abilities as a teacher, although for talk he had few equals. He would have liked his son to be placed under a better man ; but Mr. Brill was so enthusiastic on Garry's behalf, and Birkett and his wife both felt deeply indebted to the kind old fisherman for many little acts of kindness and good-will. Hence he yielded rather reluctantly to such a speedy decision, yet felt somewhat comforted with the reflection that it was to be a month on trial. Harry's mother did not like to be stiff either, but she thought a month a long time for her boy to be under the direction of a man of whose history she knew so little, and in whose looks she could read so much. It was settled, notwithstanding, and Harry next week went to "Mr. Garry's Academy."

Previous to Harry commencing school life, Mr Roper had called one evening at Birkett's, and they had a serious conversation respecting Garry. Roper had no faith in the man, and Mrs. Birkett's was woefully shaken when she heard Roper's account of the schoolmaster ; but it was settled that Harry should go.

Mr. Garry's "establishment" was in the upper room of an old house near the quay. You ascended

a high flight of steps, entered the lobby, thence proceeded up three flights of stairs, at the top of which was a sort of trap-door; through this you entered on the school-room. The windows of this room overlooked the piers and "tongues" (as the wharves which jutted out into the harbour were called); but in order that the attention of the boys might not be attracted by the views to be obtained through the windows, "the desk" was placed at the side of the room. Off the school-room was a small apartment, in which it was supposed Mr. Garry lived, though he stated that his residence was in "the outskirts." There were several boys at the desk when Mrs. Birkett led Harry into the school. Some of these Harry knew, but all turned their eyes off their books to inspect the new comer.

Mr. Lawrence Garry—or, as the boys generally called him, "Larry Garry"—was a native of "the Green Isle." He had not been long settled in Poebeck, yet was, in some respects, better known than many of the natives. He was a small man, with a slender body, weak legs, a large head, a face blotched and freckled, small grey eyes, large shaggy eyebrows, a nose fast approaching the bottle shape and the blue stage, a chin across which was a white mark (said to be a sabre cut), and a mouth which would have fully borne out the definition which his illustrious countryman gave of "an open counte-

nance;" it was indeed "capacious!" He wore a red flannel shirt, open at the breast, and had on a waistcoat with sleeves. His corded drab breeches were unbuttoned at the knees, and his buckled shoes were in "loose order." He usually carried a small cane "up his back;" how it was hid there, or kept in position whilst he walked about, the boys did not know; they knew this, that very speedily it could be brought *down* his back and placed smartly *upon* theirs. He was, as he said, "a rigid disciplinarian;" he had turned out some clever boys, and had by his eccentricity in dress attained some notoriety. The manner in which he used to discourse on "the perils of fire-water," which was the term he used when speaking of "drink," had first attracted the attention of Brill; then his courtesy and extreme politeness, together with his style of dress, completely fascinated the old fisherman; besides, Brill had listened to the history of the man from his own lips, and thought it wonderful.

Garry, out of school, was very loquacious. He had been, according to his own account, educated for the church, but failed in that from a peculiar formation of the throat. By this he was led to drink whisky, and resign a very lucrative appointment which had been secured for him by his aristocratic friends; he then became secretary to the Spanish Ambassador, and left that post because he

was compelled to drink so much bad wine. When he returned to his native land, the throat disease returned in a more virulent form, and friends recommended whisky again. This failed to relieve him, and, to avoid the importunity of friends thrusting favours of this sort upon him, he bid farewell to Ireland. Why he had, with the influential connexions he boasted of, settled at Poebbeck, he was never heard to say.

He might and did talk against drink (it had been his ruin, he often declared), yet it was more than suspected that he indulged in it still. True, no one ever could say they saw him the "worse for liquor;" certainly no one could see him better for it. But Harry had seen him in public-houses, and the boy saw during the first morning at school that "master" went several times to the small room, and always on coming out a boy was sure to be detected in some mischief. The boy was then and there "caned," and there was about the caning, wherever it came from, a smell like rum-butter-cake. The lads asked Harry if he smelled it? He did; and as they were walking home they all seemed to agree that the smell could not come from the boy's jacket, hit it as hard as you liked. Some of the boys liked rum-butter-cake, and if there was any stored in that little room they might have a taste of it. The master was stingy to keep it all to himself.

Garry was, in the main, a painstaking teacher. He soon gave Harry plenty to think of. Worked the boys hard at school, gave them tasks for home, caned boys that would not work, and encouraged those who did. It was a new life for Harry. He felt from what Garry said to him that he knew nothing yet compared with what he might. Being fond of reading, Garry procured for him a copy of "Plutarch's Lives;" and the boy, whilst reading this, was stimulated to know more, and never gave his father rest until a copy of the History of England, a large book in one volume, was borrowed from the foreman at the quay. In this the names of places excited his attention. The battle-fields, the leaders, the number of men engaged, all these Harry's memory retained; and when he had opportunity he would amuse his companions by "telling stories from the History of England."

Garry became very proud of his pupil—often called and talked to John Birkett about him (the call was invariably made on Sunday about dinner time), and months thus passed away. Birkett had an offer of a better situation "up the country," and was likely to accept it, but could not think of taking his wife, whose health was failing, away from Poebeck. He would consider awhile before he decided what course to adopt.

CHAPTER VII.

HOME AND SCHOOL TRAINING.

"I hardly know so melancholy a reflection as that parents are necessarily the directors of their children ; whether they have or have not judgment, penetration or taste, to perform the task."

A FEW months at Old Garry's school had wrought a great change in the thoughts and habits of Harry Birkett. His opportunities for play had been curtailed ; his love for it had decreased. His father being steady, the evenings at home were pleasantly employed, and the boy's attention was not distracted from his books by being called to witness the distress and anxiety of his mother. Humble as this home was, what happiness it exhibited. Even a few weeks' constant labour, and *none of the earnings being drained off for drink*, what improvements had been effected ! On Saturday evening John Birkett was exposed to the greatest temptation. This was pay-night ; the custom was (even if the wages were not paid in the public-house) for

all to adjourn to the tavern, so that, as old Roper said, "the only way for a man like Birkett to do was to follow the excellent example of Christian, in the "Pilgrim's Progress," put his fingers in his ears and 'gang on.'" The more excellent way was left for the men of these latter days to discover; "Teetotalism," as such, was not then known.

So long as Birkett would keep from tasting drink, he felt "as if he never cared for it;" once place the glass to his lips, let him "just drink the health of an old friend," he was shorn of his strength. His most firm resolution fled before the devouring element: Even his love of home and home joys, which was to him very powerful in many ways, was burnt up. The effect was as startling to his friends as it was degrading to himself. But latterly he had refrained altogether, and instead of staying in the ale-house with those who cared little about him; but for the mirth his company afforded, he hastened home; yes, would almost run off, holding his money in his hand, and turn neither to one side nor the other until the result of his hard labour had been placed in his wife's hand! Oh, what a reward that seemed to the man! How those large eyes beamed upon his sunburnt face! Why, even the children used to jump for joy, although they scarcely knew by what it was occasioned! There was the house

cleaned, the floor (the centre of it) sanded, clean clothes, the simple change for the week would be "on the maid by the fire," and snatching up the youngest child John Birkett would dandle, kiss, and toss the little girl about, making cherries with his lips and imitating cock-crowing, much to the amusement of the elder children who clustered round. Tea would be in the meantime preparing, and the children would have to sit very still while father and mother took tea. Harry often thought, when looking at his parents from his little table near the window, and listening to that clear voice of his mother asking the Divine blessing on the food of which they were about to partake, how it was that his father would not always like to be so? How it was that so many times they had to seek him in the gloomy tavern rooms, when he might be as he was now? His father seemed a deal happier, he was much more cheerful with them all at home. What was it that led him to forsake them all, at times? Mr. Brill said it was "love of company." Mr. Roper said it was "the devil;" his mother said it was father's weakness in giving way to temptation. The boy was many times sorely puzzled on this point.

The tea over, and the children having been supplied with bread and milk; father, washed and

shaved, would sit down to examine them all in their week's work. What had they learned? "Do you know anything to-night that you did not know last Saturday night?" That was the invariable question. The necessity of always doing something and doing it well—of always making some progress, even if it was ever so little—would be enforced by an anecdote, a story, or a proverb. Then as to conduct—here mother would be called upon. "Now, mother, who have you down in the black-book?" What ingenuity would Mrs. Birkett exercise to give a true report, yet place all in as favourable a light as possible. Harry had been very "snappish" with his sisters lately—they could do nothing to please him. He had gone so far as to strike one for laughing at him; but perhaps they teased him when at his tasks—he was hard worked. But still his sisters were kind, would do anything for him, and ought to be treated with affection. Such was mother's account, given with great reluctance. She could hardly look at Harry as she spoke, and stood as if ready to shield him from the father's wrath. There was no money for Harry's money-box that night, and if he escaped a sound drubbing with "Jacob" (the household name for the birch rod), he had to thank his mother's earnest and affectionate pleading.

Saturday night spent in this way, on Sunday morning John Birkett would rise early. If the weather was fine, he, with Harry by his side, would be miles out of town before half of Poebeck was awake. Rural sights and sounds he loved, and did all he could when such opportunity offered to imbue his son with the same feelings. If John Birkett could succeed in collecting a bunch of wild flowers, and if some of these were cherished ones from the recollections of them in his native heaths and hedges, and if, above all, there were some that would call forth his wife's joy, how proudly these were plucked, how tastefully displayed, what prominence was given to them in the "bunch," and how delighted Harry was to bring them to his mother at the breakfast table. Then to look at mother as the girls gazed at the flowers, to hear her telling of "the bells," and "the bonny bird's eye" with which in youth she used to deck her hair. Oh! what happiness was there; what messengers of peace, of joy, of thankfulness, were these simple flowers!

The Sabbath schools were just then becoming popular in Poebeck. The girls, Harry's sisters, attended the Church school; but John Birkett had placed Harry at a school which did not aim so much at sectarian teaching as it did at inculcating the

principles of Christianity in the simplicity of "Gospel teaching." The school was not attached to any particular church; the children read the Scriptures, and teachers, most of whom were intelligent men with "carefully formed opinions," addressed a few words of explanation on what had been read. Here it was that Harry Birkett received sound and effectual training in moral duties. This was made a feature in the school. The teachers, many of them men in humble circumstances, did not feel ashamed to speak of fair dealing, sincerity, or earnestness, even on the Sabbath, and in a Sabbath school! Obedience to parents, the moral obligation of masters and servants, and questions of a kindred nature, were sometimes spoken of, and by precept, example, and exhortation, enforced, always in a very homely manner and in very simple language; for Poebeck was a simple place altogether. True, men made money there; but the people, as a people, were said not to "advance with the tide of progress." And perhaps it may have been from such a cause that the teachers at this Sabbath school retained such antique notions as to what might prove useful to children as they grew up in life and had to make their way in the world. However that may have been, there was certainly no inducement held out to children to "learn off by heart" chapters from the

Bible. No. Even passages to support various doctrines were never spoken of as such. The teachers generally talked with the children on subjects which they could readily understand, and at the same time led them to respect, nay, reverence, the sacred Scriptures. The Bible was not made a task book. It was looked on as a privilege to stand in the class with a copy in the hand. For there were lesson books in general use, and the boys could never, by what they saw here, be brought to think that the Bible was a common school book. They never were made so familiar with it as to treat it or its divine teaching with contempt. But let it be borne in mind this was more than thirty years ago, and the world is wiser now!

There was another feature in this Sabbath-school which had a deal to do in storing the mind and moulding the character of Harry Birkett; that was the library. It was not large, neither were the books collected with great judgment or discrimination. The means were wanting. The extent of the library was amply compensated for by the excellent use made of it. It was not enough for a boy to take out a book, keep it a week or a fortnight, and return it in good condition. He had to do that and more. He was expected to read it, or give the reason why he had not done so. His reading of it

was tested by the teacher. He was, after a fashion, "examined" respecting it; and unless he passed his examinations tolerably well, he was denied a book for a week or two. It might be that a boy got a book from the library which he did not feel interested in. This was, however, very rarely the case, because the boy's teacher had to do with the selection. If the boy said he had tried to read it, and got so far and gave it up, the teacher would invariably from this obtain some insight into the character of his pupil; and these good men were not slow to take advantage of this, and administer encouragement or reproof. Then, again, the teachers kept up their influence amongst the boys by visiting them during the week. They here had opportunities of conversing with the parents, and witnessing their conduct at home, and learning their social position. These Sabbath teachers, in working clothes, speaking to one of their scholars in the streets, or breaking in upon some of them at play, and going from the playground into the humble room or house, and sitting down not always in the clean rooms or well-furnished apartments, was a common, a very common sight in Poebeck. Well might they be called old-fashioned and simple people, who would never be able to keep up with the march

of intellect. They were old-fashioned, truly; but then this was in the old-fashioned times!

The Sunday evenings were very often spent by the Birkett family at chapel, where Mrs. Brill attended. The children liked the singing, and did not often pay attention to much else; but Mrs. Birkett would not leave home and leave her children running about the streets. She chose rather to take all she could with her. John Birkett kept house every Sunday evening, and nursed the young child, in order to allow his wife the opportunity of going to a place of worship. Brill sometimes kept John company, for he wanted, as he said, to "give the Ranters the go-bye." He was a churchman, he was. He would never desert the old ship. There was too much noise aboard of the new craft for him. He amused John Birkett very much by his objections to dissent, because he knew very little about what he was objecting to; yet, perhaps, was as well informed as to what he defended as he was ignorant of what he attacked. He was very hearty, notwithstanding, in condemning all men who did, from whatever cause, refuse to take hold of the "tow rope of the church." As for his Nelly, why she went to the church in the morning, that would keep her head to the wind. The evening services at the

Ranters could do very little after that. So thought Mr. Brill, but, as his wife said, he was a queer one, and many have held on this point singular notions.

Such were the circumstances in which Harry Birkett was placed whilst his father was sober, and he was attending Garry's school. His Sabbath teacher was a blacksmith, a man who often called to see his pupil as he left work, before he had time to wash the smithy soot and dust from his face. He called one evening, and Mr. Garry happened to be present. The teacher was rather rougher, perhaps rather blacker, than usual. Mr. Garry had not much respect for Sabbath schools; he thought this large sinewy man, with little knowledge of the English language, and less acquainted with English grammar, was a very improper person to be intrusted with the training of boys; he had spoken in terms of this nature to John Birkett, and had often wished to be introduced to Harry's Sabbath teacher. Now was the opportunity. Harry's library book, "The History of the Golden Eagle;" "Some Account of the Pin Manufacture;" and the "Results of Sabbath Breaking;" three small pamphlets joined into one book, was in his hand. The boy had been asking Mr. Garry some questions respecting pin-making, and was in no wise satisfied with his replies; when seeing his teacher come in Harry

jumped up, "Oh! Mr. Garry, here's my teacher; he told me on Sunday a good deal about pin-wire; I am so glad he's come."

James Glover held forth a broad, hard, rough, black hand, saying, "I'll pin thee, Harry, my lad; I'll pin thee; I heard of thy being up at 'the sports,' and that thy master gave thee holiday to go; is that true?"

John Birkett was present, and he laughed outright at this, for he had but just before been speaking to Mr. Garry respecting the influence which such pastimes had, or might have, upon youth. Before Harry could reply, the father answered,

"Yes, Mr. Glover, Harry was at the sports. It was unknown to me. It appears Mr. Brill asked to be allowed to take the boy, called at the school, and took him away with him. The master who is now present—Mr. Garry, Mr. Glover (the gentlemen bowed to each other)—afterwards granted permission to all the boys, and I suppose they all went off to the sports. I cannot think it would do boys any good, and have just now been speaking of it. Harry's account of what he saw is not very cheering. But sit down, Mr. Glover; we can then talk the matter over. Mr. Brill's intention in taking the boy was to give him a treat. He would not do anything for Harry, I am sure, that he thought

would injure him. But let us see, now ; here is Harry, and let him tell us, now, what he saw, and, as well as he can, what he thought."

"Harry will most certainly tell all he saw. He will not conceal anything, however distasteful it may seem to us, of that I feel certain," said the teacher.

"Well, Harry, up my boy ; let us hear now how you came to go to the sports, and why you went without acquainting your mother," said Mr. Garry.

Harry was in great confusion. He felt himself very hot about the ears. He worked' his hands against his bell buttons very much, and he found out just then that his mother had come in, and was looking steadily at him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SPORTS AT POEBECK.

“To follow foolish precedents and wink
With both our eyes, is easier than to think.”

THE sports which Harry Birkett had attended in company with Mr. Brill, were held annually on a moor a short distance from Poebeck. Various accounts were given as to the origin of these sports, and various reasons urged why they should be supported. There were many other rustic gatherings in the vicinity throughout each year, but most of these had business connected with them. Fairs for sale of cattle—fairs for hiring of servants, &c., &c. At most of these, sport was blended with business, and often the sport took that turn which ended in a very bad business indeed. But these sports on the moor had no connexion with any legitimate business. They had been founded many years ago by publicans in the neighbourhood, and the only persons who derived any benefit from them were publicans and beer-sellers. There was a time when the agricultural labourers and a sprinkling of miners

used to meet here at the close of their day's work, and in all heartiness and goodwill they would have a "wrestling bout." At many lane ends, and on the village-greens, yes, under the shadow of the old village churches, on summer evenings, similar gatherings may still be met with throughout the northern counties. However good these rustic sports may be in themselves, however much they may tend to foster a love for athletic exercises, there can be little doubt that the associations to which they generally lead are most destructive to physical as well as moral strength.

It was seen by a few publicans near Poebeck that by the subscription of a few pounds, which should be given in prizes to be contended for, this rustic gathering of a few dozen men and boys might be converted into an immense gathering of all classes from the towns and villages around. Publicans, many, many years ago, seem to have been animated by the same philanthropic spirit that they so abundantly display now. They were then anxious to afford the sons of toil recreation for their leisure hours; anxious to withdraw them occasionally from the mine, or the hill-side, and place before them those enjoyments which constant labour and sobriety might deny altogether. Hence it was the money for the sports was subscribed. Hence it

was tents were erected, barrels of ale brought around, foot races, leaping matches, hot porridge eating, bell and wheelbarrow racing, mountebank exhibitions, wrestling, and all which constituted "the sports," were brought about. From year to year the fame of these sports had spread, and when they were visited by old Brill and little Harry Birkett they were on such a scale that business in the town was in a great measure suspended, in order that people might go to the sports. Children were taken there by their parents, others went alone. Domestic servants asked leave of absence, and, dressed in their gayest attire, would stroll about amongst the motley groups; and what with eating ginger-bread, looking at the merry-men, dancing in the tents, having their fortunes told, and this all mixed up with the exciting stimulants pressed upon them by kind friends or companions, they had in many ways good reason to remember the sports for the rest of their lives.

Harry Birkett was now called upon to give an account of his attendance at these sports—this, too, in the presence of his father, mother, schoolmaster, and Sunday-school teacher. The boy was very much confused, and his statement just amounted to this. Mr. Brill had called at the school, and taken him up to the moor. There were tents, in which were low

seats. On these were men, women, girls, and boys, some drinking from glasses, others from brown cups. Some were smart and clean; others were just as they left the mine. Some were smoking, whilst looking on the tricks with cards; others were swearing at their own folly in venturing their money on such a game. He saw a notice up, stating at what time the wrestling would take place, and what prizes would be given. He saw a man at the front of a show make a pudding in his hat, and throw pieces amongst the crowd. He saw a painting of a giant, a dwarf, a calf with five legs, and "a horse with its head where its tail should be!" This latter tickled Mr. Brill's fancy so much that see it he would. So fourpence was paid by him and they passed up the steps by the fat woman blowing the trumpet, in through the green door with the brass knocker, and were in the presence of a large man with his legs bandaged! The man spoke very sharply to a little boy, saying, "If I can't have a go of rum when I like, blow me if I will be bandaged up, and stewed up, and stared at any longer. Tell her now, Billy, that if she does not 'do the stiff' a little oftener, off comes the bandages, and to home sweet home I go." "Billy," a little boy dressed in professional tights, passed the message to the woman at the door, who came in, and not noticing Brill

and Harry, who were inspecting two marmozet monkeys at the further end of the show, she poured out a torrent of abuse on the man with the bandaged legs.

“You’ll slip your bandages will, you?” said she. “What good did you do when you slipped them afore? You’d a killed yourself with drink afore this only for my kindness in making a giant of you. Here’s the last of a pint of rum, and that’s all you’ll get from me to-day.”

The man grinned, winked, and gesticulated much, in order to attract the woman’s attention to the fact of a few visitors being at the other end of the booth, but to no purpose.

“Don’t grin at me, you hard-hearted scamp!” said the bugle player; “you’ll drive me to give up a giant altogether, and take to my pig as I used to have.”

Here the woman was disturbed by Brill laughing; and shaking her head at the giant, she left him to finish his rum and went outside to her music.

Mr. Brill had been listening to the dialogue, at the same time that he was supposed to be looking at the monkeys. On wandering round the place he had come on a sort of manger, in which stood the horse, whose work it was to drag the caravan. It was tethered with its tail towards the manger; and

thus placed it constituted that very extraordinary exhibition, and most curious animal, "A oss with its head where its tail should be!" Brill laughed very heartily—pointed out to Harry the trick that was being practised, and would wait until more people came up, in order to watch their surprise, or vexation. But very few were vexed; all seemed to think it was clever, particularly when the woman said, "We practice no deception here,—what we say that we show you." As they came out of the show the crowd were asked to "inquire the character." No one could reply for laughter, and the crowd took this as a recommendation of the exhibition.

As Brill observed to the boy when they were going on towards the wrestling ring, whichever way they turned one thing met them—Drink's doings. Brill had not been much at sports of this sort, and would not be found there again. The crowds from the town were now filling the tents; dancing had begun; and what with smoke and foul language the place was unbearable. The prizes were being contended for in the ring, and Brill would like Harry to see the "science of wrestling." He paid for the boy to be allowed inside the ring. Harry was much pleased to see the men grasp each other; and as every muscle of their well-formed limbs, quivering with the strain made upon them, was brought into

play, the excitement of the spectators found utterance in shouts of cheering encouragement. Now one stalwart man is lifted off his feet, yet his antagonist cannot get him down ; thus they remain for a few seconds ; the shouts of the crowd on both sides are deafening. Again the wrestlers are on their feet, and writhing and straining every nerve to secure the mastery. Again they close ; now for it. "Well done !" "well done !" "bonnie lads !" By a clever stroke and herculean strength one throws the other clean away from him, amidst the loud plaudits of the spectators.

Even in this wrestling ring, drink and its effects were to be seen ; young men walked round soliciting orders for ale, and sitting on the grass, betting, smoking, and swearing, others consumed the liquors as fast as it could be brought in. Outside the ring the company was becoming riotous, and Brill was anxious to take Harry home, and in some respects sorry that he ever brought him there. The man eating fire and swallowing knives as they passed the conjuring booth did not affect the boy in any sense so much as to observe the old trader in earthenware, overcome by drink, and lying in a helpless state by the side of his stock in trade, whilst passers-by jeered and laughed at the sight.

When pressed to tell what he thought of the

holiday-making as seen at the sports, Harry with some reluctance told his teacher that it seemed to be very hard work, and could not be pleasant work either, as men whom he named were considerably overcome with fatigue, and others were cursing and swearing in the most violent manner. He had seen many such sights in the public-houses where he had many times gone to look for his father, and he had seen nothing at the sports which he had thought of so seriously as the "mug man" who was lying asleep. One of the boys from the Sunday-school who was at the sports with his sisters made a fool's-cap, and placed it on the old man's head, at which the crowd laughed very much. Harry knew that this old man had a sick child at home, a little boy who walked with a crutch, and who was sometimes taken on the little cart with his father. Harry had met with this father and son on the sea brows, and had watched how gentle and kind the father was to the poor little cripple. "Jackey," for so the boy was called, had told Harry one day as they sat together looking at the sea, how good his father had been to him since his mother "was taken to the burial hole." How he took him round the villages on the little cart, how the people gave him "butter cakes, and sweeties," and how very happy they were together, except at "fair times ;

then father gets always taken away from me," said the little fellow weeping, "and I am at our lodgings a long time alone." When Harry Birkett saw the old man lying beside the cart, he thought of the touching words of the poor little crippled boy. It was now "fair time;" here was the father, where was the helpless son?

John Birkett had a long conversation with Harry's Sabbath teacher, for John was fond of what he called "manly sports," among which wrestling held the first place with him. He was, however, compelled to admit that, however good a pastime it might be, once let it become a profession and it induces associations which could not but be detrimental to those who practised it. So it had now become with wrestling. Young sinewy men, supple as the mountain ash, and firmly knit as the oak of their native forests, had indulged in wrestling for pastime. Their efforts were successful. They had the misfortune to win a small prize or two. They could not help treating kind friends who had backed them and applauded their doings. They gave way to drink, and grew still fonder of wrestling; and then, as now, great men in the ring are found to be great drunken scamps outside; men who will talk of honourable conduct, and fair dealing, and honest play being bonny play, and yet are summoned be-

fore magistrates for neglecting their wives and families.

John Birkett could not escape the force of the argument adopted by Harry's teacher, for, as he put it, the sports and wrestling were got up by those interested in the sale of drink ; the wrestling led to company keeping, and this led to drink. And not a village about could be named in which some parents had not to mourn the destruction of their happiness and the disgrace of a son or daughter by reason of the vicious practices engendered by sports such as Harry Birkett had witnessed.

Harry's teacher had a deal to say to him about sports, and he sat with the boy until bed-time.

CHAPTER IX.

HARRY RECEIVES MARCHING ORDERS.

"She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up and call her blessed."

JOHN BIRKETT had resolved to leave Poebeck. This resolution had been formed after much consideration on the part of himself and his wife. His fellow workmen were much attached to him; their habits were not generally those of steady men, and, consequently, he was exposed to an amount of temptation which he found it difficult at all times to resist. Hence it was that he thought a change might be beneficial to himself and family. Jane Birkett had not failed to observe the struggles which her husband had undergone for months past. She knew from sad experience what evil companionship had done for him, and she dreaded a still worse result were he to remain. Poor as she was, she was not always without hope of better days! Still, she

felt these would not arrive if her husband was to be continually in the society of men given up to mere animal gratification. There was in her eyes a worse evil than poverty. There was, what she saw in the manners and habits of many around her, that stolid indifference to social or domestic comfort, that being content, as it was expressed, "whatever comes or goes." She saw women who a few months before could take their children with them or go themselves decently attired to a place of worship on the Sabbath—now going from house to house in rags and tatters. Women, whose homes were happy, and whose days passed cheerfully whilst the domestic duties were being discharged, whose children were kept neat and properly cared-for. Now the home was almost deserted, the children were left to the tender mercies of the streets. The husbands had formed the habit of spending their evenings at the alehouse, where the wages were paid, and where credit for drink was readily obtained on the strength of this pay-night; the wives, worn out or wearied with trying to keep a full house on half earnings, influenced, nay, encouraged to join their husbands, and take a drink with them, whilst they waited for the paymaster, had their appetite for drink fostered and stimulated, and now had recourse to that exciting liquor on their own account.

The mode of living in Poebeck was favourable to the formation of female companionship. The great majority of artisans or "strangers" who had been encouraged to come here, as Birkett had, by reason of the pier works, had to take lodgings. There were no small houses to be had. People who could afford it got as near to the outskirts of the town as they could, and let their town houses to a number of families. Every floor would contain one or more families; this, too, without any of the arrangements in order to secure domestic privacy which are to be seen in some of the "Scottish flats." It is easy to see what occasions would thus arise for misunderstanding. If a very slovenly woman lived up the same stairs as a scrupulously clean housewife, what jarring, what brawling was wrung from one side or the other! To be neighbourly was then, as now, a virtue; but in order to be virtuous in this sense here, what serious consequences were frequently involved! You must be in the fashion, even in this humble condition of life. Indeed, people were not then wanting who would argue, as interested men do now, that to be fashionable is preferable to being virtuous. They would not be stiff, and set themselves so much above their fellows. There was a pride of heart in being "singular." *That* they considered empty pride in the extreme; never

should it be said that they would give way to that. No; such views held by men and women, and acted upon, led to an increase, a fearful increase, of domestic misery; and all this might be traced to the evil influence of what was called "being neighbourly. A man or woman sinking his or her individuality, yielding to a temptation, gratifying an evil propensity, inflicting on themselves and their families a positive injury to secure — what? an imaginary good, which was said to lurk in the habit of "being neighbourly."

There was in the mind of John Birkett a great tendency to give way on this point. He liked to be friendly, would sacrifice a good deal to be so; indeed, had sacrificed himself and family under this foolish impression. His wife, on the other hand, had no share in this feeling. She knew what it was to have a neighbour; she had felt what a neighbour's kindness was; but she could not see what there was of neighbourly feeling in the fact of people always being anxious *to pull you down to their level, however low that might be*. If a child were sick in her neighbourhood, if a poor mother were suffering, Mrs. Birkett, from her "skill in simples," and her manifest kindness of heart, was almost sure to be sent for, and was ever ready to yield to the solicitation. Thus it was she gave

utterance to her views on "being neighbourly." But, as she said, again and again, to her husband, and to Mrs. Brill also, "If I cannot be considered friendly or neighbourly unless I neglect my house, give way to gadding, and become a tippler or drunkard, I fear it is hopeless to expect my arrival at the dignity. I have seen, and still see every day, what neglect of home begets; and I have suffered enough through drink and its associations to cause me heartily and firmly to detest it and them, whatever form they may assume."

Having these feelings, and holding such views, Mrs. Birkett inwardly rejoiced at her husband's resolve to leave Poebeck. In other respects, she felt that the little town had strong claims on her affection. It was the first town she had ever resided in. Great as the change was from a rural village to a bustling town, different as were the manners and customs to those in which she had been brought up, yet she had met with considerable kindness, and many hearts here beat warmly towards her. She had often been in positions of great trial and difficulty, when friends were needed; and here, amongst strangers, friends had been found. The "spice of life"—variety—had no charms for her. She, on her own account, looked forward to the change with a troubled heart. But when she

thought of her husband, of the possibility of his being weaned from intemperate habits by the charms of rural life—when she thought of her family, of the scenes and society amongst which they had to move and mix, and how different this might be, how much more beneficial for them—her selfishness, what little ever presented itself, was overwhelmed by the gushing feeling of womanly love which flowed from her faithful heart.

It was a great trial to John Birkett to leave Poebeck, even after he had nerved himself for it. In a domestic point of view, when cast upon his own resources, he was very helpless. Being used to the care and attention of his wife, all his wishes and wants were anticipated; and when he had been called away from home for even a few days or a week, as he sometimes had been, to do little jobs of wall-mending for farmers, he always felt the loss of home keenly, and rejoiced to regain it. When, therefore, he contemplated this separation from his family for a month or two, his spirits sank, whistle as blithe as he might to keep them up.

The situation which he had accepted was sixty miles from Poebeck. A new wing was being added to Hazel-hall; an old friend of Birkett's was the overseer, and knowing his skill in stone-cutting, and the pride he took in his work, he gave Birkett

no rest until his proposal were accepted. To move a family sixty miles, thirty years ago, was a formidable undertaking; Birkett could not do it in the first instance. He must go, take lodgings, save what he could for many weeks, in order to raise the means of transport for his wife and little ones. Then it would be a matter of consideration whether the family could or should be taken there; the work might not last more than six months, and there was no town of importance near. Birkett's chief reason in accepting of the offer was this, it was an escape from Poebeck and might be the introduction to something better.

Brill and his wife, as a matter of course, were taken into the confidence of the Birketts, as well they might. Who had Birkett to look to in his absence but the good-natured fisherman and his wife? All the jovial companions with whom he had spent his time and money, were they not looked to or called upon at such a time? No; Birkett had sagacity enough to see the folly of expecting anything from that quarter; but to the good old rough-spoken, sometimes gruff and churlish fisherman, and his plump, happy, even-tempered Nelly, Birkett and his wife turned with full and hopeful confidence.

Brill, after twisting himself about on the chair, and twirling his curly locks with his fingers, could

find nothing to say against the change, much as he regretted to lose Birkett's company ; he thought it a good opening, especially as the overseer at Hazel-hall was a man remarkable for his sobriety and attention to his business. As to Mrs. Birkett and the youngsters being left, Brill was comfortable enough on that point ; indeed, he hardly knew what Nelly would do without them now.

"But," said Brill, "what about Harry?"

"We thought," said Birkett, "that Harry might go with his father. He will have to tramp the distance, but that he will be glad to do. Then his father thinks, from what he hears, that the boy may be made useful in 'tool carrying.' The smithy is half a mile from the hall where the masons work, and they will require a boy to take their tools to and from the smithy ; for this labour they generally pay a few pence each per week ; this would help his father's wages, and I would have no objection to Harry going, but he is very young to turn out on the world."

"Good, good ! well done, Mrs. Birkett !" said Brill, and slapped his hands heavily on his knees, being somewhat excited. "You talk sense now. Too young to turn a lad out in the world ! That's the old yarn. The lad will, I suppose, have to get his living by work soon ? You don't expect any

rich relation in 'the Ingies' to leave him a fortune, so that he may do without dirtying his hands, do you?"

He waited for a reply. Not obtaining one, he took it for granted, like many other wise men do, that none could be given, and he therefore proceeded:—

"Very well; depend upon it no lad or girl was ever put to work too soon. I've seen many put to work too late; the 'lazy-bone' had been allowed to make head-way, and they could never outgrow it; but I never saw anyone put to work too soon. I've been working since I could walk; I like work, and so should every man that has to live by it. Harry likes work; he likes books, too, and as I take it, the books are as hard work as any you can put him to; but then in your case it is work that brings nothing in, it doesn't go to make the pot boil."

"Well, Mr. Brill," urged John Birkett, "Jane does not press the pot-boiling view very strongly, and, indeed, I don't think that is her sole cause of wishing Harry to go. Harry is, as you know, a great favourite with her, and how she can part with him I don't know; but she thinks, perhaps, that he may be company for me, and remind me of home, because I am sometimes apt to forget it. 'Give a dog a bad name,' that's it; is it not, Jane,

my lass?" and Birkett looked pleasantly towards his wife.

"Oh, oh!" said Brill, "I see, I see the course now; ay, ay, she sails close to the wind," and Brill whistled very softly and very long.

"Well, indeed," said Mrs. Brill, "Its natural enough for mother to wish Harry to bear father company, and supposing it is only as you say, John Birkett, to remind you of home, I'm very glad to think you see and feel that. Harry will be a comfort to you, and no one will feel his loss more than his mother; she has done more than I would have done, in agreeing to Harry leaving home at all. However, let us all hope the arrangement will be for the best; let us set to work in good earnest, and see what will be best to do in order to make them comfortable during John's absence. Come away, curly wig!" said she to her husband—"Good night, Jane! God bless you," and she shook the hand of Mrs. Birkett warmly.

It was left to Mrs. Birkett to tell Harry of the change that awaited him. This she did next morning, as she was making father's breakfast ready for the boy to take to the quarry beyond the sea brows. The novelty of the tramp, and the beautiful country he would pass through, excited Harry very much, and he received the announcement joyously. But when he was returning from the quarry, and

had sat down on the cliffs, as he often did, the thought flashed across his mind that where he was going might be very beautiful, might be more beautiful than anything that he now gazed on, but he would be away from school—he would be away from some dear playmates—he would not have the smiles of his sisters to cheer him on in his tasks or play; above all, his mother would be sixty miles away from him, and he, who had never been from her for a day, might be months without hearing her voice encouraging or cheering him; yes, sixty miles!

“You’ll be sixty miles from me, Harry, but I will continually bear you up before Him who never fails to help in the time of trouble; oh, I will think of you continually, my boy, that I will; don’t fear that, my son.”

Harry fancied he felt his mother’s hand gently smoothing his hair, as these fervent words of hers rose to his mind.

“No, mother, I’ll not fear, why should I?” said Harry to himself as he arose from his reverie and made for that home he was now under orders to leave. How very pretty the town looked that morning as he stood on the hill which commanded a full view of it. How the cattle turned to look at him as he passed through the pasturage!

CHAPTER X.

HARRY GOES ON TRAMP.

"My boy, the unwelcome hour is come
When thou, transplanted from thy genial home,
Must find a colder soil and bleaker air,
And trust for safety to a stranger's care."

HARRY BIRKETT and his father were to set out on Monday. On Saturday evening Harry's Sabbath-school teacher called, bringing with him a small book, which he presented to Harry as a token of remembrance. This was "The Life and Works of Benjamin Franklin." He told Harry that this was the first book which had been given to him at school, and that he read it with great delight. The example of perseverance and industry had encouraged and supported him; and the wise maxims it contained had ever been found useful to him through life. He hoped Harry would read it with attention and keep it by him as a memento of his school-days at Poebeck. This Harry, with tearful eyes, promised faithfully to do. Mr. Garry was present. He was very serious, and seemed touched with the affection which James Glover displayed

towards his little pupil. He had bought the boy a small casting-book, as it was called; that is, a work on arithmetic. Knowing the boy's love for figures, he urged him to devote all his spare time "in prosecuting the science of numbers." Harry's heart was full, and at his mother's suggestion the teachers left him. She then took from her old square carved oak "kist" that very wonderful Bible story-book, and wrote her son's name on the first page. After telling him how dear that book was to her, from its associations with her early life, and what an interest it had created in her mind for the reading of the Sacred Word, she charged him to take great care of it, and hoped its simple narratives would have a like effect upon his heart. Then the children were called around her, a chapter from the New Testament, John xiv., was read, and the little household knelt down whilst mother poured out her humble and touching petition to the Giver of all Good Gifts, pleading earnestly for her dear boy, who would soon go forth into the world. There was not a dry eye in that little assembly, and years after, when the lips were closed, and the voice hushed, the children could all repeat many sentences of that mother's prayer, and tears would fall at the remembrance.

The last Sunday at the Sabbath-school was a

painful one for Harry ; he would have gladly forgotten that he was going away, but could not. Every person and thing reminded him of his journey, and occasioned regret at leaving them. Mother took him to the Ranters' chapel in the evening ; it was a sermon on behalf of the Sabbath-school. The preacher was a stout, round, smooth-faced man, with a strong guttural accent ; added to this was a full-sounding Yorkshire dialect, curious gesticulation, and extraordinary action. His text was, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will pay thee thy wages." His plain language, homely illustrations, and fervent, indeed impassioned, appeals to parents and children, were most telling. The sermon made a great impression on the mind of Harry. He was cheered and felt encouraged "to go forad," as the preacher had recommended all to do ; and when in onê enthusiastic burst the zealous old Yorkshireman called out, "the little babby 'mong t'rushes wur t' same Moses as struck t' rock !" the excitement of the audience was very great indeed, and Harry "was fain" to shout, he knew not why. Harry felt his mother's hand tremble very much as they made their way homeward down the dark slippery steps, and she looked very lovingly upon him when he was telling his father what a preacher they had heard, and recited

his curious narrative of the finding of little Moses "by t' watter soide!"

On Monday morning father and son were busily employed making preparations for their journey. It would in all probability occupy them three days. That was what Birkett expected, and had, with this view, sent his box of tools on by the carrier to the nearest market town to Hazel Hall, where he hoped to call for them on Wednesday. There was a great attempt to make merry at the breakfast-table, but the attempt failed. Harry could not eat. His mother took breakfast with them, and immediately after bid each of them a tender and affectionate good-bye. She could not stay to see them leave her. No! She had tremblingly entered the closet and the door was shut!

Harry's sister Sarah, a laughing, lusty, black-eyed girl, who teased Harry very much, yet of whom he was very fond, had wished to walk a little way out of town with him. Carrying a small bundle, containing a simple change of clothing for himself and son, with a good stout staff in his hand, and apparently a cheerful smile on his face, John Birkett set off.

Old Brill and his wife had been anxiously looking out for them. When the feet were heard on the stairs, out the good couple came to greet them.

The old man was very cheerful, almost merry. He laughed and joked with them, picturing imaginary dangers in lonely valleys, and no end of hair-breadth escapes in mountain mists. His wife had "sweeties" and small papers of one thing or other, which she crammed into Harry's pockets, rattling the bell buttons on his velveteen jacket, and talking herself out of breath the while.

"Here, Harry, my boy," said the old fisherman, in his heartiest manner, just as the travellers were leaving the door; "here is some shot for your locker!" (slipping a shilling into the boy's hand.) "And here, look! here's the thing you talked so much about. My knife with two blades! My grandfather gave it to me when I fell overboard! at least I found it in my pocket when they got me round, for I was nearly done for. Now, keep that knife, and when you use it perhaps you may think to yourself that's old Jem's! Now, hold on. Keep your hatches open! Here's a horse-hair line, and here's a little box of fishhooks for you! You can make them useful where you are going, I know. God bless you, Harry, I wish you a pleasant tramp. Yes, I wish you——" The old man drew the coarse check shirt-sleeves across his eyes, and made for his little cabin.

"There's a booby!" said his wife; go in with

you ; a nice one to make fun of me ; oh, you soft-hearted old Jem ! Good-bye, John ; good-bye, Harry, dear. Now, John, remember, a letter every week, you know ; I have agreed to pay the postage ; it's only ninepence ! Away with you !" Father and son were off up the street ; sister Sarah holding Harry very firmly by the hand.

When about two miles out of town, Harry parted with his sister. He wept bitterly on leaving her, and turned again and again to look at her slowly making her way to that home he might not see again. John Birkett had watched his son very closely, but had spoken little. Now when they were alone, and the country began to open out, he engaged the boy in conversation, and pointed out to him objects of curiosity, interest, or beauty, on the road over which they passed. It occupied some time for Harry to get his little presents in the easiest way for him to carry, and there was a deal to say about every one whom they had left, particularly those who had been kind to him. By the time they were got into walking trim a sense of fatigue came on. Harry would not, in answer to his father's questions, say that he was tired : that would never do. Yet the father noticed that he did not pay so much attention to the hedgerows ; he had not made any remarks about the hills

looming in the distance. It was just the commencement of harvest-time, and the reapers had settled down in several fields, busily engaged in securing the reward of the husbandmen. About noon they reached a pretty little village. Here father resolved to rest awhile. They sat down under the shade of the bridge which spanned the river, and partook of their first meal by the way-side. There was a good substantial church close by the river. Birkett, having refreshed himself, rose to inspect the masonry of this. Harry lay on the banks of the stream: the music of the water, as it rippled over the blue smooth stones, had almost lulled him to sleep. He was aroused by the sound of voices close by, and, on looking up, found that his father had gone, and three young men were approaching him. They were on a fishing excursion, had obtained permission to go up stream, and were on their way thither.

"Here's a native," said a ruddy-complexioned, fashionably-dressed man. "He will tell us how far we are off the Abbey lands. Hallao! my boy, are we on the right track for the Abbey?" addressing Harry.

"I don't know, sir; I never was here before. I am going a long journey with my father, and we have just laid down here to rest awhile."

“ Well, where is your father? Oh, I see. All right; here’s the Gaffer,” said he, as John Birkett, witnessing Harry’s consternation, smilingly approached.

“ Your little boy seems alarmed. We were anxious to know as to whether we were approaching the Abbey lands; do you know anything of these parts.”

“ Yes, sir,” said John. “ I know, as it is expressed, every foot of the road. You are close on the Abbey,” and he directed them, round by the church, up the shaded lane, then up the footpath by the old mill-race, when the ruins would be in sight.

“ Perhaps you’d have no objection to come that far with us,” said one of the party, “ and allow your little boy to carry this rod and creel, for it’s deuced hot?”

“ None whatever.” Indeed, John felt rather proud than otherwise; he did not like loading Harry, though, therefore took the creel himself, giving the boy the rod, and off they went to the Abbey.

Birkett, being well read in the history of the country, and having also a great love for the various traditions and romantic tales connected with old halls, abbeys, or castles, was able to discourse with the young men on the foundation and early

history of that sequestered abbey, the ruins of which they now approached. Who it was founded by, what was the order of the monks, what they levied on the landholders in the neighbourhood, and what they did in return for what they got, was talked over humorously and sarcastically commented upon. When Birkett launched out, as he was apt to do, on the conduct of the monks, contrasting it with that of the State clergy of modern times, there was a good deal of mirth created by his homely thrusts and quaint sayings, and the young fishermen looked suspiciously at each other.

They now got by the mill-race and entered the valley where stood the monastic ruin. The smooth closely-cropped grass, over which they walked, the well-grown sycamore trees around, the wooded slopes and cultivated patches in the distance, called forth the admiration of the young men. Turning sharply down under a row of stately beech trees, the arches of the abbey, covered with many-coloured climbers and creepers, stood out before them.

John Birkett had forgotten his home, his tramp, his altered circumstances, by reason of the feelings which the association of the place had called forth; and he surprised as well as pleased the visitors by the hearty and intelligent manner in which he spoke? Here was a beautiful piece of carving.

There was a groined ceiling, worthy of the name! Here, outside, they would be able to form an idea what had been the original height of the arches; inside, the mosses age after age had been industriously at work filling up, no year without its layer, so that the proportions were hid. Look, too, at the form—how true to the profession! Look in at the cloisters; here are the original chisel marks—no mistake, and the reason was given why this opinion was held. All were delighted; none more than Birkett himself. As they threw themselves down on the moss-covered chancel, Birkett looked a happy man; and Harry, who had listened with attention to his father's description and history of the ruin, felt glad to see the return of that old smile.

“Well, now, you have given us a deal of information, and we are obliged to you,” said the oldest of the three men, who had not spoken much during the inspection of the abbey. “Your knocks at ‘the parsons,’ as you call them, were very hard; but you didn’t think, perhaps, that any of that class were within hearing. Some of us are destined to become ‘parsons,’ old fellow; but in order to show you that we can display more charity and forbearance than you seem to give us credit for, here, now join us in our flask of brandy, and try to forget the monks of old!”

Loud laughter on the part of the other two at John Birkett's consternation, roused him a little.

"Well," said he, collecting himself, "I've heard it said that if the parsons were to hear in a plain way the common people's opinion of them and their profession, it might do them some good. I'm a plain man myself—generally speak in a plain way. I like it, and it suits me best, I think. No offence was intended, and if none has been taken, all well. I spoke what I felt to be true, forming my opinion on the result of my experience with the world."

"Oh! all right; don't say another word. Parsons in this generation ought certainly not to be thin-skinned if the style you think and talk is likely to become popular. But drink with us; it will refresh you. This is a little of the real stingo; I brought it from home—none of your country-bought brandy. Come, take hold and toss it off."

"Well, gentlemen," said Birkett, "you'll excuse me, but tossing drink off, as you call it, has been my ruin. I need never to have had occasion to tramp the country for employment had it not been for drink. You'll pardon me, I'm sure, but I'd rather not touch. I have forty-five miles to walk during the next two days, and I fear this would not help me."

Oh! how earnestly Harry looked at his father, and how imploringly he looked at these handsome young men, as they pressed the drink upon him! When his father had positively refused to taste, the boy's heart leaped for joy.

"Oh, bother! you are one of those men who cannot but abuse, therefore you think that you ought not to *use* what was intended for man's comfort, to cheer his heart, to make his heart glad! Come, don't be stupid; a small taste of brandy will assist you during your tramp. Come, here you are; you will not often get the chance of tasting that sort of thing."

The young men could see that John was faltering. "Oh! he wanted coaxing," said one. "He's too sly by half," said another. John laughed at these sallies: he did not like to be rude; they were kind; had given Harry a shilling for carrying the rods; it was altogether stupid looking to treat gentlemen in such a way; he might just taste with them for the social appearance of the thing—to be sure he might; and amidst great laughter to be sure he did.

The flask emptied, the young men got their cigar-cases out, and John produced from his pocket his small pipe and tobacco-pouch, and the party smoked and chatted for almost an hour, finishing

up by John obtaining from the future parsons a good stiff parting glass of brandy, which they said would make him spin along as if a proctor was after him.

John Birkett and his son reached the highway again. After leaving the village, the country opened out on the right, and a fine valley, stretching away to the sea, flanked with hills that have made the county famous, kindled the old love of the man, and he talked away to his son of the brave old knights and their supporters who had fought and bled hereabouts. About six miles further on they would halt for the night. He had told Harry to look out for a stream dashing over the rocks which were now rising on the right. When that cascade was reached they were near their journey's end for that day; and as the boy felt tired, he strained his eyes to look for the cascade, and stopped now and then to listen for the roll of the water. His patience was at length rewarded; and tired as Harry was, he crept up the ghill where the stream fell; and amidst the spray of the force, and under the clusters of the hazels, gazing at the cone-topped larch, and watching the restless leaves of the silver birches which sprang from the cleft of the dark fern-covered rocks, he wondered where his mother was, and how she would rejoice to see such a sight as this.

"Come on, Harry, my boy," said John, rather impatiently; "come on, we are just by the inn, now. I'm very thirsty, so come along; you can come out and look up the ghill, or climb to the head of the force, if you like, after tea."

Very few minutes after they entered a small roadside inn, and an old woman gave the two travellers a kindly greeting.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BATTLE OF LIFE BEGINS.

“ The battle of our life is brief ;
The alarm—the struggle—the relief ;
Then sleep we side by side.”

THE house in which Birkett and his son spent their first night from home was a very humble roadside inn, the only one within a radius of several miles. Birkett was known to the hostess, who was glad to see him, and who set before him a substantial and comfortable meal. As evening crept on, visitors came straggling in, and the large parlour was, before dark, filled with farmers and farm labourers, village smiths, and the shopkeeper ; neither was the shoemaker wanting to contribute his share to the amusement of the company around the ale-table. Harry Birkett was very sleepy, so much so that the good woman suggested the propriety of his going to bed, even before the evening customers had begun to turn in. Again and often the boy asked father to come to bed, without effect.

Birkett was restless; he was tired, but did not feel disposed to seek the proper restorative. No; he would not go to bed—he would stay awhile and hear what was going on; for all the affairs of the dale, and all other dales around, would be discussed here before the company broke up. Harry might go to bed—indeed he ought to go—he was worn out. Being quite overcome with fatigue, Harry yielded; and in a small room, from which there was a fine prospect of the vale, with the stream winding down, and the large hills overlooking and keeping guard upon all, the boy was soon wafted away into dreamland.

The night was far advanced when Harry was aroused from his slumber. Oh! how that voice startled him! So heavily had he slept that a few minutes elapsed before he could assure himself as to his position. He jumped up. The moon had climbed far above those hills, and her beams were glancing on “the beck” which prattled so pleasantly on its way to the mill-race. The willows by the bridge-end waved very gently, and their shadows played upon the pool below. Men’s voices were heard, and the same voice which had so startled Harry was heard again. Oh no, it was no dream! There, by the moonlight, he saw his father “linked arm-in-arm” with men without

coats; and crossing the bridge, led on by Birkett, the staggering group sang—

“Our hearts unto despondency we never will submit,
For we’ve drank together many a time, and so will we yet.”

Again and again was the burden of this song taken up, and the hills and woods re-echoed this sentiment, so equivocally expressed. The night in the parlour—early morning on the bridge—the young parson at the abbey forcing the drink upon his father—his father’s refusal—then his acceptance—what this had led to—these thoughts whirled rapidly through the mind of Harry Birkett. Oh! what was he to do?

The sounds of the voices gradually died away, and after a short time Harry saw his father recross the bridge. He then crept into bed, and tried to lay still; his father soon after stumbled upstairs, and was guided into the room; the odour of the room was soon that of the parlour; and the boy had seen enough in days gone by to convince him how this had been brought about. He slept no more that night. The day seemed a long time dawning, and the first rays of the sun, which lighted up a picture of “The Woodman” suspended near Harry’s bed, brought a little cheerfulness to his heart. He gave up weeping, dressed

himself, watched quietly until he heard some one stirring in the house, then glided downstairs, leaving his father to sleep off the effects of the night's carousal.

The servant-girl whom Harry had noticed the evening before had just risen. She was surprised to find the little lodger up so early, and accosted him very cheerfully. She was a ruddy girl, with flaxen hair and large blue eyes. She wore a small-pattern printed cotton bedgown, linsey-woolsey petticoat, and check apron. She did not attempt to conceal what, in primitive ages, was considered the glory of a woman—her hair; for it hung in wavy curls about her dimpled cheeks, and was tossed about her shoulders as her morning's work proceeded. She had got into the parlour. "This was a nice place for a girl to come into first thing in the morning, wasn't it?" she said to Harry. But she would not be long there now: she was hired for six months—must "bide" her time. Then she would get far away from a drunken pack of hounds as ever she saw, that she would. "Oh, dear! the smell of this place nearly gets over me," said she, as the window was thrown up.

"You want to go down by 'the force.' Well, you cannot miss your way unless you are deaf." She opened the door, and Harry was soon sitting on

the grass above the waterfall, cracking some nuts which he had met with in his climb. He had brought the "Life of Franklin" out with him, and the simple story of the philosopher's boyhood interested him deeply. The villagers were all astir when Harry broke away from the coppice, and bent his steps to the inn. He met little boys and girls on their way to school; some carried little baskets, others had bags slung across their shoulders containing their dinners. They looked very hard at a strange boy, pale and sorrowful. One of the boys made up to Harry, and in the plainest way, and with all the simplicity of his heart, expressed what was suggested to him by Harry's appearance.

"Did ya loss yersel?" was the enquiry.

"Oh, no," said Harry, "I'm not lost; I know my road." He passed on, and the little rustics stood in the road staring after him until he passed on to the public-house.

Birkett was late in rising. When he came downstairs he found that Harry had made friends in the kitchen; had been served with a good large bowl of porridge, and was all ready to start. Breakfast was prepared for Birkett, but he could not touch it. The drink had told upon him. His eyes rolled wildly, and the happy smile which Harry had noticed on his face the day before had fled. Its place

was taken by a gloomy scowl, which made the boy tremble as he thought of what this might lead to. Having obtained a drink of ale, which he said would make him "all right," Birkett paid the bill for lodgings, &c., and they set out.

Their road for miles lay over rough mountain tracks. There were no woods, scarcely a tree to be seen. Winding drearily up the hill, mounting the craggy precipices, coming on the valley, bare and desolate, along which a dark river rolled (a drink from which both travellers were heartily glad to take), then going over a pass on the mountains, which was nothing more nor less than a beaten track in the dip between the hills—a lovely valley opened out before them, and they sat down to rest, inwardly rejoicing that cottages or houses of some sort were in sight. For five hours they had not seen a human being or habitation. Birkett, pressing on, annoyed at his folly and suffering from the effects of it, had scarcely spoken to his son; this made the solitude greater than it might have been, and the walk altogether wearisome. Now the smoke curling from amidst dark clumps of trees in the valley beneath them indicated a seat at the table and a frugal meal for which both father and son were now prepared.

They reached the first farm-house in the valley,

and obtained ample refreshment. They had no beer; it could not be had. Birkett seemed dissatisfied, Harry thought. They were now in a more civilised district, consequently were not long in reaching a public-house. Birkett stayed an hour or more drinking and smoking, and he was very loquacious when on the road again. House after house was visited as they passed, and by night the father was far gone in drink, and the boy took his hand to guide him, yet not knowing anything of the road. Harry had ceased to fret. It did him no good, and made his father not one whit better. While the drink was being consumed by the father Harry had been lying down in the hedges or by the doors, and had got far on with Franklin. That picture of him walking about the streets eating a penny roll, and another tucked under his arm, Harry could not forget. No one to guide or direct him, and yet look how he did. What would he do were he in my place; that let me try to do, thought Harry.

They lodged that night in a barn. Harry found it was impossible for his father to get on, and as for him carrying the bundle and leading his father to the nearest town, eight miles off, there was no chance of that. He therefore went boldly up to the farm-house door and told his simple tale. "We

are going to Hazel Hall. My father has spent nearly all our money ; the ale has made him stagger ; and he is very ill ; will you let us stop in your hay loft until morning ? I will sit and watch him all night, and I am sure he will do no harm."

The farmer, a brawny man, rose from his large chair near the peat fire on the hearth, and looked very suspiciously on the boy. He did not know. There were all sorts of scraffling monkeys knocking about now ; there was a barn set on fire not long since by those tramping set. No ; he thought it best to refuse.

His wife then came forward, and Harry answered all her questions satisfactorily. His mother once lived in a house like this, he told her, and it would grieve her very much were she to know that he had thus to seek for shelter.

After some conversation between the farmer and his wife, permission was given to sleep in the barn ; but the precaution was taken of removing pipe and tobacco from Birkett's pocket ; the farmer saying, rather gruffly, that he did not want the place set on fire, and they might have " bacca and aw ther things in 't morning." So they turned in and lay down upon the hay, the door was locked upon them, and John Birkett was soon fast asleep. Harry lay by his side, and although the place smelled sweet,

and he was very weary, his eyes never closed. He thought the place very dull, the night very long, and was glad to hear the cock salute the morning, and rejoiced to see streaks of sunlight coming through "the chinks" of the door.

They were aroused early, and had to get away. The men about the farm treated them very rudely, so much so, that Birkett was stung to retort upon their sneers; as he said, not so much for his own sake, but his boy deserved, and ought from their hands to receive, better treatment. He was honest, that was more than could be guaranteed for them. He hoped never to see the boy in such plight again, and he dashed out of the yard amidst loud laughter.

A walk of eight miles would take them to a town where Birkett had friends. They washed their faces in the first stream they passed, and Harry could see now that his father was provoked, it might be to good works. Birkett had not much recollection of what passed at the farm-house the evening before, and had only a very dim remembrance of getting into the barn. He now conversed with his son and learned the facts. "We'll make up for this, Harry! come on my boy," and he quickened his pace, the boy half running, half walking by his side. They soon reached Fell-side, the nearest

market town to Hazel. Here John Birkett met, as he expected, with a friend, and they had a good breakfast together. Then the tool-box was looked after, and found at the carrier's, all safe. This was taken away, and before all preparations could be made for starting on this the last stage of their journey, noon had passed. They had thirteen miles to go, and the tool-box to carry. Birkett was in capital spirits, he was to all appearance cheerful. He would have done with drink for some time now, for ever he hoped, seeing what this last turn had brought him to. So he told the friend with whom he breakfasted. "Come away, Harry, my man," said Birkett, in the heartiest manner; "never say die whilst there's a shot in the locker. Off we go to Hazel; you'll sleep in a pretty rose-covered cottage to-night. Just such a cottage as your mother has told you about; uphill we go cheerily."

"Hearty as ever, John," said his friend; "good-day to you; send word by the carrier how you get on. I will be glad to hear, and I mostly see the carrier once a fortnight. You are sure you'll remember the road I've told you of?"

"All right," said John, and they were off, up the hill, out of town, and soon came in sight of a long moor, over which their route lay.

CHAPTER XII.

RAIN AND SUNSHINE.

“God has not given a monopoly of benevolence to the rich.”

AFTER walking for about three hours the travellers sought for rest, and lay down on a heather-bank, by the side of the peat-moss over which the road lay. The air was sultry, and with the excitement of the previous day, and having now his toolbox to carry, Birkett felt weary. Harry for the last two miles had exhibited symptoms of distress. Loss of rest, and the dread with which the boy looked forward to being from home for any length of time, neglected by his father and left to struggle for himself among strangers, had depressed his spirits. They had not spoken much, but as John saw the grey hills approach them, and the dark clouds begin to gather and thicken, he called Harry's attention to the circumstance, and urged a vigorous effort to

be made lest they should be overtaken by the threatened storm. He did not feel safe either concerning the way. They had left the turnpike road, in order to save a distance of two miles or more. He regretted this the more now seeing that the night might prove rough, and he might not easily find shelter. They tramped on again, but had not made much way before the rain set in. It was not heavy, but thick. Not a strong straight rain which indicates clearly what is meant and has done with it, but a steaming mist, which conceals distant objects, makes those nigh at hand look large and gloomy, and saturates the traveller before he is properly aware of his position. There was no shelter to be had. There were large stacks of peat on the mosses at either side of them, but to reach these there was no safe road which they knew of. It was thought best to struggle on; surely some house would be reached soon.

For two hours the rain continued, and they had seen no house by the way. Darkness was coming on; Harry's feet were sore, his strength failed, he could walk no further, and he sobbed out his woes. Birkett did what he could to cheer him. He saw a glimmering light in advance—they could not be far off it now. Taking his son by the hand, at other times staying to wipe the rain mingled with

tears from his cheeks, soothing him with the most comfortable words, and trying to encourage him forward by pictures of future happiness, they reached a very small cottage. The light which they had seen so far off was the gleam from a bright peat-fire on the hearth, which shone through the small square window. Birkett knocked at the door, and was answered by an elderly woman. She had no accommodation. They were out of the way for Hazel; it was six miles off, and the road was not good. Birkett explained the difficulty he was placed in; told the dame that for his own part he would stay under the shelter of her peat-house all night if she would but take the boy in, for he was completely exhausted. She had not noticed Harry before, so throwing the door wide open, the full glare of the fire gave her a complete view of the plight in which the father and son were placed. Her womanly heart gave way, and she agreed to let them rest awhile, if nothing more. Her husband and family were in bed in the adjoining apartment. He had to go out early in the morning to the moss (she told them) and therefore always went to bed "soon as ever day went down." She had knitting and mending to do, but that she managed to do "by the firelight." Candles were "over dear" for them to use. She told the weary tramps to draw up to the fire, and asked Harry to

pull his shoes off; but the boy was overcome, and was slipping off the old stump of a tree which formed his seat by the fireside, when the good woman caught him in her arms with a scream which awoke the household. He had fainted. There was a great bustle ere he came round, and the cottagers were somewhat alarmed. Simple restoratives were soon at hand; the boy's feet were placed in hot water, and he was carried to bed. All that he remembered was, strange eyes looked earnestly upon him, and a kind and gentle voice murmured as his blistered feet were being bathed, "Ise flate, he is badly, Ise soor I is, poor lyle felley!"

In the morning Harry awoke in amazement. Where he was he could not tell; how he had come there did not at first occur to him. He lay on a soft clean bed, with blue and white check curtains hung around. There was another bed in the apartment. The half of the small window was thrown open; the air from the mosses revived him. By his side lay a little girl. She was very fair, and her golden hair had broken away from the bonds of a closely-fitting nightcap, and a few curls lay across her cheek, but did not conceal the smile which played across her small mouth. Whilst Harry looked upon her, or perhaps by his jumping up suddenly, she awoke. Her eyes met Harry's, but her mother was by the bedside before she could

utter a word. The little girl was lifted from bed, carried away in her mother's arms; Harry was kindly spoken to, and asked to get up if he felt better, and gradually the night's adventure came vividly to his mind. This was the little cottage that his father had pleaded so hard to be admitted into, the cottager and her daughter he had just seen—where was his father?

His doubts were soon set at rest. On entering what was termed "the house" (where the simple people cooked and sat, to distinguish it from where they slept), John Birkett was sitting in a large high-backed arm-chair; here he had sat and slept through the night. They had a son of their own away somewhere, they did not know where he might be wandering, and therefore they could not find in their heart to turn Birkett or his son out on such a night—so this peat-cutter and his wife said. No; neither would they allow them to depart in the morning until a basin of oatmeal porridge was placed before them. This Harry heartily enjoyed, and his little golden-haired bedfellow was at the other side of the table, with her grey twinkling eyes lighting up her fair face, and gazing upon him as the story of their walk was being related. There was another girl who helped her mother to get breakfast ready. Harry thought he had seen

many girls like her, but the face which met his when he awoke, whose was it like? Why could he never tire to look upon it?

After many acknowledgments of their kindness on the part of Birkett, which was all that he was now in a position to offer, the cottagers were parted with; and Hazel village, a small place, consisting mainly of the houses of the hall servants, was reached. The foreman of the masons who had written for Birkett was on the look-out, and was the first to welcome him. Lodgings were secured for them at the farm-house close by, and to their future abode father and son at once proceeded. Birkett would go to work at once, he had lost time enough; so after dinner they went off to the Hall, and under the shade of a stately sycamore John began his work. Harry had been met with in Poebeck by Mark Gibson, the foreman, who had often taken a Sunday morning walk with Birkett and his son. No time was lost in placing Harry to work either; and when the children were going into the village-school, which was a small cottage at the end of a row, Harry was passing in company with Mark Gibson, who was taking him to the "smithy," to introduce the little tool-carrier to the smith. Harry had ere this been initiated into the mysteries of "mason's work." He knew the peculiar geometric

forms by which his father and many of his fellow-workmen distinguished their work. He knew that the mark found on the mason's mallet and chisels would be found also on every stone which he worked for the building; and, albeit, there was in this knowledge some of the mysteries of "the craft"—yet Harry knew that such mark was, in most cases, a matter of chance, or dependent upon the taste or fancy of the workman. No book had *then* been written to "show the connexion of masons' marks with the mysterious rites and ceremonies of freemasonry." People in the main found time to cultivate common sense. Idle curiosity and time destroying under another name was not so popular.

Harry was pleased with their lodgings. It was, as his father had told him, a rose-covered cottage; indeed, all in the village were so. The season was past for the great show of bloom, but here and there a flower lingered late, and by the latticed window where Harry slept some sturdy shoots had been seized upon by the yellow climber, and were now golden with the flowers. The first day in the village was one of excitement: everybody and thing was strange. A good night's rest restored the travellers, and at half-past five o'clock they were out on their way up the large avenue of horse-

chestnuts which led to the hall, and met the breeze laden with heather fragrance from the hills. The first week passed pleasantly. Sunday they kept in the old way,—an early walk, morning at church, evening spent in rambling about the district in company with fellow-workmen.

Mark Gibson was a fine, robust, intelligent Scotchman. He had never been married, and was now approaching forty years of age. He had received what it is the great glory of many little villages in Scotland to give—a good education; and although there was nothing bright or showy in his conversation or demeanour, there was a staid, solid, careful manner about him, a cool deliberation, which told greatly in his favour. He was not fond of company, but liked a friend to chat with; and, failing to find this, it was not unusual for him to make a friend of some boy or girl, whom he would take with him in his walks, and whose toys or games would deeply interest him. Mark Gibson lodged with the schoolmaster—a small, deformed man—who used to say he was made a schoolmaster because he was not good for anything else. Mark had noticed when he called in one evening that Harry was reading “Franklin,” and, on entering into conversation, found the boy very anxious to “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest;” so he

asked him to come over to his house, where the schoolmaster and himself amused themselves in trying to puzzle each other,—they might be able to set him to work thinking, and give him something to think about. “It is thinking, Harry, which makes the man; reading will do you little good without it,” said Mark one night. Harry judged that he had thought a good deal. Mark did not know half of what he thought about. He did not know that, while he was supposed to be reading “Franklin,” sometimes his thoughts were far away from the book, and his home, his mother, his sisters, his playmates, all came around him. Some of the faces looked sympathizingly upon him, others frowned; but his mother’s watchful eye, which he often thought was looking down upon him, always kindled in his mind hopeful thoughts, and then he would return to the page of “Franklin” with renewed vigour. “What does Mark mean by thinking,—am I not always thinking?” asked Harry of himself.

Harry having now to mix with the men at their work, and to meet with all sorts of people at the smithy, was furnished with many subjects to think upon. The smithy was about half a mile from the village, at the bottom of a steep hill, by the side of the turnpike-road. Just on the hill was the

alehouse, known as "The Hazel Arms." Sometimes when Harry took his bundles of tools, which he used to sling across his shoulder, the smith would be shoeing a horse, and so soon as the horse was shod, so surely would the smith go up the hill to "have a glass." Either the man treated the smith, or the smith treated his customer, and no business was considered properly settled until it was "damped." Farmers used to call as they were passing, and, whether they wanted any work done or not, they generally took the smith away from his work, up the hill; and when he returned it was no unfrequent occurrence for him to commence cursing and swearing at Harry, saying he was never so much pestered with a lad in his life, and that he wished the masons and their tools far enough away. Harry could not see that he had given any occasion for these outbursts, and innocently enough one day told his father how the smith abused him. Birkett smiled and turned away, but Mark Gibson was within hearing, and Harry was soon fully enlightened as to the cause of these outbursts of passion.

"Yes, Harry," said he, "anything which interferes with a man's drinking habits is sure to give offence. Drink must be master. You take that smith employment. He is well paid for what he

does. You have to wait and bring the tools back with you ; this is a check upon him. He is disposed to go up the hill, and take his glass with anyone who offers ; your presence with the tools reminds him of his work, when he wishes to be idle. You might think he would be glad to see you coming round by the bridge whistling with your load on your back ; but no, a man who loves drink never has a proper love for his proper work. As the love for drink increases, the love for work or honest labour of any sort decays. When I was a young fellow whisky drinking was an evening pastime, and I for a while indulged in it. I do not believe that during the four years that I used to drink I ever went through a thoroughly honest day's work. I mean, I don't think my heart was ever in my labour. In the morning I was thinking of the past night, and as the day wore on, of that which was to succeed it. I had every opportunity of making progress in my trade, but I did not care to think about it only so far as by it I earned money to spend. Had I not been checked, my life would have been a short one, and I would have lived in vain. Now, Harry, you are young, you tell me your mother has warned you concerning drink. I think father might tell you something on that score, too (glancing at Birkett). But as to the smith and his treatment of you—do not give him any occasion

for offence. Never speak to him in reply. Do your duty to those for whom you are working, and notice what drink will do for him; you cannot be warned too soon."

Harry thought over this conversation often, and it was pressed more closely on his attention by the fact of a letter from home, which his father had received, containing a scrap of paper addressed "For Harry." It was from his sister, and contained the simple records of the children's daily life, and expressed their love for their dear brother. Closing thus—"Mother told us to write this, and says you must repeat it daily, and never forget it:— 'Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red. At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder.' Mr. Roper has been giving little tickets away with this printed on, and mother is going to send one for you in the next letter."

A month at Hazel soon passed away, and the cold weather was setting in. John Birkett had, so far as Harry knew, kept out of the way of his great tempter, strong drink. The evenings had been spent happily around the fire-side, or in visits to

neighbours' houses ; but as they grew longer Birkett did not seem to content himself, and would wander from home. The remittance of money to his wife began to fall short, and Mrs. Birkett had written to Mark Gibson. This had vexed Birkett, and one Friday evening when Harry called at Mr. Gibson's house, Mark told him that his father was likely to leave the Hall, but he must not be surprised if he did. "You can earn your own livelihood," said the fine honest fellow, "and let your father and everybody else see that you can do it; I will write to your mother, and tell her that she may rely upon me doing what lays in my power for you. If she agrees that you may stay here I will see to it. If she wishes you at home I will see and send you there. But keep your own counsel; that is, Harry, do not speak to any one about this; your father may repent; he may see his folly in throwing up a place like this at such a season of the year, and if so he will not feel pleased to hear of your resolves or my plans."

The next week Birkett did leave Hazel, never having said anything to his son respecting his departure. He had been drinking deeply for several days, and one night when Harry went up to his little room he saw that the clothes had been removed, and was told by the farmer's wife that his father would "not be back vara soon."

CHAPTER XIII.

A LESSON ON SELF-RELIANCE.

“Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents, which in prosperous circumstances would have lain dormant.”

JOHN BIRKETT had really left his employment at the Hall, and left his son to the mercy or consideration of strangers. This, Harry felt at first painfully. Mark Gibson, knowing that John was resolved to go, notwithstanding all remonstrances, and thinking what the circumstances of the boy would be when left in the farm-house with no one about him that could offer the proper encouragement, had, with that kindness for which he was remarkable, walked on to Harry's lodgings, and was in the great kitchen waiting for him when he came downstairs to partake of his evening meal. Harry's eyes were moist. He felt altogether heated and feverish. He had on several occasions lately spent the evenings alone, and even when his father was with him there did not appear to be that

joyous fellowship between father and son which Harry had once known. Still, he is my father, thought Harry, and sorry as I am to see him weaning himself from me, my feelings compel me to submit in silence. Now he is gone altogether, and I am sixty miles from my dear mother. No one could surely chide the boy for weeping.

Mark Gibson had for a purpose watched Harry's conduct and habits for several weeks. He had put himself out of the way in order to place the boy in trifling difficulties, so that his natural disposition might be more fully known. He had in a variety of ways tested his temper, and had come to the conclusion that the boy was of a determined disposition; but this determining power was rather wrung from him than wielded. They had played draughts together. Whilst Harry was contending against superior odds,—whilst his adversary was skilful and wary, the boy played well: there was much to gain. The honour of beating an opponent was something, but very little unless there had been a good stiff fight for the mastery; and if the game was well contested, the more Harry became involved, the better he played. If he could escape a difficulty he rubbed his hands in high glee, and if he were ultimately beaten, and the game had been keen, Harry was more inclined than ever to go in

for another. They worked arithmetic together. The rules which Harry liked best were those that puzzled him most. So Mark had noticed in the little affairs of life and in his daily work, when the boy was beset with difficulty, then his energy displayed itself—it was drawn out. Sympathy was worse than wasted on him; it acted injuriously. The best encouragement he could have given to him was to be shown how he might help himself!

Mark greeted him as usual, and although Harry's sobs broke away from him now and then as he took tea, still no notice was taken of the burden which the boy bore about him. Harry looked several times very imploringly at Mark, and Mark met his gaze impassively, although he knew very well what the boy expected, but this he was determined not to give. Mark would talk on anything, but he never alluded to the fact of John Birkett leaving his son. Mark knew the nature of the metal he had to work upon.

"Did you know, Mr. Gibson, that my father had left here?" asked Harry, after a time, seeing there was little chance of getting to the subject unless he commenced; "did you know when I was going off to the smithy that last journey that my father was collecting his tools ready for leaving me?"

"Yes, Harry, I did," said Mark, looking mildly

upon the boy. "I knew your father was going some time since; I told you it was likely he would, and what good would it have done for me to tell you that your father was going off. Would you have done your work any better? Would you have been back from the smithy any sooner? Or would that drunken smith have sworn at you the less? Besides, your father did speak to me concerning you, and I had something to do with your being left here. He was not going to Poebeck. He would not tell me where he was going; perhaps he did not know. He was very short with me, and said he would get out of the way of spies, and then he might be comfortable. But never mind now, Harry, I will speak to you about this some other time. I am very fond of your father; but what he said to me to-day confirms me more strongly in the opinion that habitual drinking will eventually eat all good out of a man, and leave his heart rotten at the core. Much as the drinkers boast of the courage and nerve which the flowing bowls produce, they are nevertheless cowards at heart."

"Did father leave no direction for mother?" asked Harry.

"No," replied Mark. "He will, I hope, write to her. But I want you to come down home with me; come away, boy."

Harry went home with Mark ; he went the next week to live with him. Mrs. Birkett, on the receipt of Mark's letter, and after a consultation with Mr. Roper, agreed to allow Harry to remain, and wrote him a most touching letter filled with good counsel and advice—a letter which Harry read again and again, which he always carried about with him, and which cheered him in his cold and dreary work through that long, long winter. His mode of life would have been very monotonous and unsuited to his years but for the kindness of Mark Gibson. He it was who now took upon him the task of preparing and training Harry rightly to battle with the world. He it was who showed Harry how far a shilling might be made to go, and how far in his case he ought to make it reach. His wages depended on the number of men at work, and on the quality of the stone they were cutting. In frosty weather there was no work going on ; and although fortunately there was this winter no very great length of frost, yet Mark told Harry this was a matter he must calculate upon, and therefore prepare for. To encourage the boy in thrifty habits he persisted in making the schoolmaster's wife with whom he lodged compel Harry to find his own board. It might be that he would not have allowed the boy to fall short of food, but still the first few

weeks, before Harry had got into the way of foraging for himself, he did in nowise hold out any hope of such a thing. He showed the boy what was useful and wholesome food, what was the cheapest for him, and what the best. He showed him, too, the distinction which not unfrequently exists between the best and the cheapest, and this Harry never forgot. He showed him how habits of extravagance first took their rise, and how easily a man might, with very little trouble or annoyance to himself, eat himself into debt. He showed, too, the power and independence which a man possessed who could put his hand in his pocket, buy what he wanted, and still have a shilling behind. And what with hints, jocular allusions, quiet, serious conversation during their evening chats, and more than all, by the beneficial example of a consistent, thrifty, even-going life, this cool-headed, warm-hearted Scotch mason thus laid the foundation stone of the lad's character. Anything that Gibson did was done solidly, carefully, and not without much thought. He had seen much of the world, and had profited by thinking on what he had seen. He did not spend his time in vain regrets. If he had not lived before, he did all that he could to live now, and he made up for lost time by using rightly the present.

There was a good deal of discussion in the house as to Gibson's rigid mode with Harry. The schoolmaster did not like it, neither did his wife; but Harry himself never felt the chain. The occupation it gave his mind in planning how to lay his small wages out, and the comfort, nay, delight, he experienced sitting down to eat bread which he himself had purchased with his own money, these were his compensation, if he needed any. Gibson met all the objections urged by the schoolmaster and his wife with telling facts, drawn from his own experience and the experience of men whom he had met with. He had been well cared-for in youth, never knew what it was to want a meal, neither could he tell how to buy it or what it would cost. He had no conception of the value of money, and spent years of his life in extravagance, if not something worse, in consequence. Being pressed hard one evening respecting Harry, the schoolmaster saying he was sure the lad did not give himself enough food, that he feared to do it, Gibson replied to him in this way, Harry not being present: "You don't know the lad as well as I do; you don't know what that lad brings with him from a thrifty mother, as I do. Do you mean to tell me that anything, I don't care what it be, will compensate for the neglect of teaching a boy, yes, or a girl either, self-

reliance? Where or how could you teach a boy like Harry Birkett so effectually that what he gets, or what he may become, depends entirely upon his own exertions? Suppose, as you say, he were to give you so much a week, and you would spare him all the trouble, and let him eat with yourselves. It is quite true the boy might in all probability be better fed, but look at what you take from him! What you call trouble is not such to him; there is a motive set before him now, and that is the great feature in the lad's present life; take that motive away, you will sink the boy at once; he will not remain with us a week; he will be off to his mother, his hope of making anything for himself or her will be gone. He will see that work hard or late it will be much the same; it will be the round of the mortar-mill-horse, with this disadvantage, Harry will have the use of his sight. Had I been subjected to such a course of training in boyhood, yes, or even when manhood with all its fascinations opened upon me, my life would have been more worthy of the name, and my opportunities of usefulness would have been increased. It is unusual to see a little boy struggling away as Harry has to do. Well, I grant you that it is so. That is no reason why any alteration should be made. It is, I am told, rather an unusual thing to teach girls and boys (girls parti-

cularly) how to read and write in these parts ; yet you are now engaged in it daily, and I hope with some success. It is unusual for boys to be careful, thoughtful, industrious, and saving ; quite so. But rely upon it, these are qualities that are so useful, so much to be admired, and will be so much in request, that no harm can result from their being well laid in the foundation of a boy's character."

Mark was much pleased—so much pleased that he dare not express half he felt—when, just before Christmas, Harry and he were walking home one evening, he stopped short in a sharp whistle which he indulged in, and, looking up at his kind foreman, said,

"Mr. Gibson, I have got four shillings saved, and I wish to ask you whether it will be right for me to spend it all at once."

"Well, Harry, that depends."

"Ah," said Harry, laughing, "I thought you would say that ; you always say it just depends, or it will depend."

"Quite right, boy, I have a habit of that. It depends on what you are going to spend it on."

"Well, you recollect that cottage by the side of the moss, where we went to last Sunday week—that cottage where the people were so kind to father and me ?"

“Yes, yes, I do that, very well, Harry. I saw you having a long talk with that little girl whilst we were talking about mending the old man’s peat-house.”

“Well, I was going to tell you about our long talk ; that little girl told me that I could get nice check pinafores like hers for my two sisters for four shillings, and perhaps, if I schemed it well, an apron for my mother also ; and I thought, if they could be got, and if you could get the carrier to take them to my mother for Christmas, how pleased she would be. I often wish I could send her something, now that father is away, and she has to work so hard to keep the children.”

“That is a right way to spend your first savings, Harry, and I will gladly assist you to do what you wish ; you cannot do too much for your mother, I am sure.”

Gibson was much pleased, and the parcel for Harry’s mother was made much larger than the boy’s money could make it.

CHAPTER XIV.

“He turned away—his heart throbbed high,
The tear was bursting from his eye.”

HARRY BIRKETT, under the fostering care of Mark Gibson, spent the winter at Hazel very profitably. He would have been happy at his work, and consented to undergo any hardships which fell to his lot, but the news from his home at Poebeck was not cheering; and the boy, knowing that his mother was left to struggle for the family, would often wish that he were by her side, or could in some degree assist or cheer her. For five months Birkett had not been heard of. The Hall at Hazel was almost completed when spring arrived. Men were being turned off weekly. One of the best stonecutters had obtained employment at Riverside, where large docks were in progress. He had written to Mark Gibson respecting the situation, and casually mentioned that John Birkett was working

there. Mark lost no time in communicating this to Mrs. Birkett, and she, after making further inquiries, determined to dispose of what goods she had, take passage for herself and children, and if needs be, call in the aid of the law to compel John Birkett to do what the love of drink so seriously interfered with, or prevented. Her health was completely broken. She could struggle no longer for the children. Whilst she supposed her husband was no more, her fortitude bore her up. Now that she knew by the mouth of several witnesses that not only was her husband well, but in constant employment and in the receipt of good wages, her resolve was to seek him out, lay the children before him, and make one more effort to recall him to a sense of duty.

Before Mrs. Birkett could make arrangements to reach Riverside with her family, Mark Gibson had accepted the post of foreman of the granite men, at the Riverside docks, and he was hastening the works at the Hall to a close in order to get away to his new situation. It might be that John Birkett would be one of the hands under him, but whether or not, he would soon be in a position to serve Mrs. Birkett, and that, too, in a way which he much desired. The prospect pleased him. He was anxious to realise it, and still allowed everything

to be finally arranged before he communicated his plans to Harry.

The summer was setting in, the hawthorn blossomed on the hedge-rows, and the song of the cuckoo had gladdened the hearts of many in Hazel, before Gibson could complete his work at the Hall. Harry had known for weeks past that he must leave, and had on many occasions asked Mark what course he had best pursue. The boy's questions were evaded, or cautiously turned. Gibson had been most attentive to the boy's education. Harry was now enabled to answer his mother's letters from home, and had beyond this received sound instruction in what Gibson used to say was far above the mechanism of writing—thinking before he wrote, and writing only what he thought, not using customary phrases merely because they were customary, but just stating what he really wished those to whom he wrote should know, and doing this in the shortest way and in the plainest language. Harry's letters had charmed his mother; and Mr. Brill, to whom they were always read, said he knew, yes, he always knew that the boy would be sure to get hold of the right end of the rope.

The boy was strolling by the river one evening with Mark, when the smith, overcome with drink, passed them. "There's your friend, in the old

way; do you notice any alteration in that man since you knew him, Harry?" said Mark.

"He is not a friend of mine, Mr. Gibson," said Harry. "He hardly ever treated me with civility. And when his little boy was injured, and as many supposed killed, by falling from the wheel of a cart, at the smithy door, he did nothing but curse the wheel, swear at the cart, and then go into the public-house. I would never care to have any friend who would do as he does."

"Well, well, you are quite right, boy, in calling him no friend; but tell me, now, what alteration you see in that man since you have known him."

The boy mused a little. "He is not so clean as he used to be, and he swears more," was the reply.

"Anything else?"

"Yes, he often used to come from out of his own house to the smithy. Lately I have never seen him come out of any place but the public-house kitchen, and he seems to have made that his home. Then his temper is growing worse and worse, and the way he speaks to his children when they come to ask him anything reminds me often of my father's conduct to me; he is snappish, and I can't see what it is for."

Mark had drawn Harry as far as he wished. He now opened up to the boy the wondrous means

which the demon of drink devises to draw off the mind gradually from all that is right; wean it from the discharge of social or domestic duties, and centre it upon evil, and that only continually. Then he turned the conversation upon the boy's own life, what it had been, and asked what was it to become? Would he like to go again to Poebeck and share the fortunes of his mother; or would he, now that he could help himself, continue to do so?

Harry would like to see his mother, even if he did not do so well for himself; even if he had to go scantily clad and pinched for food. What would that be to him if his mother were the happier? She wanted him to come home now; she wanted him to go with her in search of his father; she had written to Mr. Gibson that the boy ought now to be restored to her. Yes, oh dear, yes; how could he stay when she had said, "I would like to see you, my dear boy; Mr. Gibson gives me a very good account of your behaviour, and I see by your letter what he has done for you. For all his kindness a blessing will surely rest upon him. I am fearful to take you from under his kind care, but we are all longing to see you very much."

Harry handed this letter to Mr. Gibson. He could not speak; but there was an eloquence in

this reply which touched the manly heart of Mark Gibson. As the boy carefully folded the letter and put it in his pocket Mark looked on him, saying,

“ Well, Harry, I’ll not keep you any longer in suspense, I will leave here next Monday. I am going to take you to your mother at Poebeck, and it may happen (he smiled very pleasantly as he said this) that I will accompany you and your mother to Riverside, where your father now is. Wipe away those tears, you are far too ready to give way to your feelings.”

Mark was glad to turn his face away as he said this. He was more glad still to meet with one of the workmen who lived next door to him, and by this means change the current of his thoughts. He saw that Harry changed colour, and that his eyes were brightened, and his heart was beating with the joyful intelligence ; but he thought it best to allow the full force of future happiness to tell on the boy in the most natural way.

“ I suppose we will all be parting next Monday,” said the man.

“ Yes,” replied Mark.

“ Well, there has been some talk, Mr. Gibson, of our having a stroll together on Sunday, what few there is of us left now. We will sup together at the Hall on Saturday evening ; that will be our

breaking-up supper; and those of us who have spent our leisure in rambling the hills on Sundays after church would like to take a round with you for the last time. What do you say?"

"With all my heart," replied Mark; "but here is my little matey, Harry. Next Sunday is our last Sunday here; where would you like to spend it, boy? Speak out now; don't be led by me."

"I promised my mother, Mr. Gibson, that I would spend my last Sunday at the little church where the moss-cutter and his family go. I never was there but once; and you know how kind the people were to my father and me. Besides, my sister sent me a little book-marker for that little girl you saw me speaking to, and I want to take it to her; that is the way I would like to spend the last Sunday."

"Very good, my boy; very good. It shall be so," and he patted Harry on the head. "That can be done, and need in no way interfere with our stroll; we will go our round, leave you on the road to the mosses, and call for you in the evening. I would like to see those people myself." So it was settled.

The supper at the hall was well attended. It was a great feast. The steward presided. The health of the proprietors was drunk with great

enthusiasm. Men under the influence of ale which had been in barrel "a great lock of years" said many things which they never meant, and others which they might, had they been sober, been ashamed of. The work at the Hall had occupied more than twelve months, had given employment to more than fifty men, had been brought to a successful termination, "no accident having occurred," as it was said, "to life or limb;" and this was considered the proper acknowledgment to the Great Author and Giver of all good gifts. Men washed out their senses with liquor to show how thankful they were that health, strength, and sense had been spared to them. What a picture is this of life in the past! Where can the "rearing supper" or the "completion feast" now be met with?

Mark Gibson attended the supper; he was very hearty. When the chairman rose to propose the first toast, Mark took Harry by the hand, saying, as he left the room, "You will, I am sure, excuse me. I have not much brains, perhaps, what little I have I want to keep. Harry and I are going for a long stroll to-morrow; good-night, all people. We will see who can climb the fells best in the morning; good-night."

Next morning Mark and Harry were out early.

They had no companions. The night's enjoyment was in some cases being reflected on, in others this could not be borne. Men cannot be jovial in the drunkard's sense at night and be happy in the morning. They are, even the most hardened, rather timorous in speech, they do not like talking much about their spree until they are again warmed with liquor; they are not sure but that they may have made great fools of themselves; they are seldom wrong in this surmise. One and another of the "Jolly Companions" were called on. "Not up;" "Not inclined to go out;" "I've been thinking its perhaps hardly right to go walking on Sunday;" such were the answers Harry listened to, and such was just what Mark Gibson expected.

After breakfast Harry and he set off. They soon reached the hills which skirted the mosses, and as they approached the peat-cutter's cottage the father and two daughters were just setting out for church. This was lucky, thought Harry, and he walked along the moss over the hill through the wood, and came out by a grove of beech trees which led up to the old church. "We go every Sunday to church with father, however bad the weather is, and we always stop to look at my brother's grave," said the fair girl who walked by Harry's side. "Come here, and I'll show you where it is;" and she led

him up by the side of the church among many little green hillocks, until she came to one over which a small ash tree waved. "Poor Johnny," said the child, throwing a sprig or two of golden broom over the grave; "he was killed at the gunpowder works, a long while since, but none of us can forget him." Then her sister came up; she strewed a few simple flowers and grasses, and last came the father and Mark. The old man took off his hat, wiped his brow, sighed heavily, and looking on the strewed flowers, said, "Ay, that's reet; that's what the lad desarved." Then turning round to Mark he said, "It's a custom we hev here." "So I see," said Mark, looking around the yard, where were many groups employed in keeping green the memory of departed relatives or friends.

"There's the bell ringing in; come away, Harry," said Mark, who seemed much interested in the ceremony.

They all proceeded slowly through the ivy-covered porch, and the birds around were singing merrily.

CHAPTER XV.

LEAVING POEBECK.

“I owe thee much, Thou hast deserved of me,
Far, far, beyond what I can ever pay.”

THE rapid rise and extension of the Port of Riverside had become matters of history. England had not witnessed anything equal to it, and the facts gave rise to curious and ingenious speculation. It was known to be, yes, almost within the memory of man, little more than a small fishing village. It had made itself famous by its connexion with the slave-trade. It was now a great maritime port—said to be second to none in the world. In all circles of society Riverside formed a topic of conversation. Poor boys had gone there—boys who had been driven by necessity, others from a love of adventure or choice; they had to beg their first night's lodging, and some of them to walk about barefoot and starving for days: yet now these were merchant princes or leading tradesmen, well fed, well clothed,

comfortable sort of people, who spoke of "the lower order of society" with a creditable amount of feeling, and subscribed to charities and founded others, taking very especial care that "posterity" should know who they were, rather than what they had sprung from. The poet had not yet sung

"Worth not birth shall rule mankind
And be acknowledged stronger ;"

and if he had, few might have been found to believe him.

The fame of Riverside had attracted thither men from all countries. The position of the port pointed it out as the great landing-place for nations. The "natives" formed a very small proportion in the vast population, yet they had secured for themselves "rights and privileges," which were as carefully guarded as they were, when occasion offered, unrighteously enjoyed. "The accident of birth" here conferred in some cases advantages which made fortunes ; yet those who were designated "freemen" revelled in the rights the so-called freedom gave, and became the most abject slaves. Strangers were, in trades and professions, looked upon with suspicion, and treated with more than indifference. Yet they flowed into the town and flourished. Frowns, sneers, or even petty acts of injustice, will not im-

pede the progress of men who feel they are standing on their own legs, have right on their side, and a position to gain. It was hopeless for the aborigines of Riverside to contend against the encroachments on these "sacred rights" which the strangers were making on every hand. As well might they have striven to stop the rolling of those waves from the Atlantic which carried vessels of all nations to their river, causing their one dock to become a dozen, and lining miles of quay and space with the produce of every clime. Still, they were Englishmen, and not well educated Englishmen either; and the pertinacity they displayed in clinging to "the rags and tatters of old opinions" may be characteristic, but need not on that account command esteem.

Another matter which caused the attention of the whole country just now to be turned to Riverside was the part which its leading men had taken in what was looked upon as "but a disastrous speculation"—the formation of a railroad. Some of the merchants of Riverside were the main supporters of George Stephenson in his persevering efforts to lay a line of rails between Milltown and here. Year after year had they opened their purses and patiently waited for the end; and now that time drew near. A day had been fixed upon for the public opening of "the greatest of all undertakings—the eighth

wonder of the world—the Riverside and Milltown railroad.” A trial had been made, the result was every way successful. No one less than the “Iron Duke” could be considered fitting to open this iron way. A leading minister of State would be his fit companion on the occasion. The country rang with the preparations in progress, and whilst many saw in these events good fortune smiling in the distance, others thought and said and wrote that folly was now at its height, that the country might soon “become the laughing-stock of Europe,” and that the success of Riverside, which hitherto had been marvellous, was now about to receive a check. Men should be content to let well alone. Canals answered every purpose for inland communication, and as for travelling, why, there was the fast four-horse coach. What vain shadows men would pursue, surely!

Such was the state of feeling and such the position of affairs at Riverside when Mark Gibson had engaged to take charge of some dock-works there. He had many times read, and at other times had spoken to Harry Birkett, respecting Riverside; and now when they had reached Poebeck, in order to accompany Mrs. Birkett and family to where her husband was hiding, Mark lost no opportunity of impressing on the boy the advantages which such a large and

thriving town would place within his reach. One day, whilst reading of the preparations for the approaching event, the opening of the railroad, Mark stopped, mused a little, and after tapping the lid of his snuff-box a few times, looked earnestly at Mrs. Birkett, who, with Harry by her side, had been listening to him, then said,

“ Now, Mrs. Birkett, you have known me many years, you know I am not apt to be led off by any merryman who may pass by, neither am I given to building in the clouds. I like to have something solid for my foundation; and as I was showing Harry the other day, I have in my nature something analogous to what is found in the ring-tailed monkey, which always has a good firm grip of one branch before it will untwirl its tail from another. It will have a proper and secure hold at one end. That’s what I like, too. Yet with all my caution, in this matter of our going to Riverside, so convinced am I that it is the right step for myself and you, that I would forego all other offers to take this. Then as to Harry. I am just in his position. At least in one sense I place myself in it. There’s a rising town, paths of honour, paths of wealth are there opened up to all who will pursue them. We see how men have got into the paths, what struggles they had before they reached the entrance gate,

what self-sacrifice, what self-denial, what temptations they had to shun, what baggage they had to get rid of. They did, however, gain the path, and to their honour kept it, and see what they are, and who they are. The way is open for me, and if I will it I will reach it. There can be no doubt about that. I feel my mind solidly settling to this way of thinking. I may not be great, I may not be rich. I care not to be either; but I feel determined to get a few steps up the ladder and am longing to climb. I know from experience that every short step I take upwards tells powerfully on the prospect I will obtain. I know, too, that as the prospect increases so will my efforts to ascend be stimulated. I feel, too, that my opportunity has come, and if I miss this it is no way sure what effect it may have upon me. I am willing to do anything in my power to assist you in placing Harry on the right track, therefore I hope you will hesitate no more. It is, you may depend, the turning-point in Harry's life. Say the word, and I will decide about our going together."

Mrs. Birkett had been hesitating. It was in her nature to shrink from trials which she might avoid. She had been enabled for many months to support her family, might she not continue to do so? Her health had failed; yes, but her daughter was be-

coming very useful ; could now save her a deal of labour, and they might, in all probability, be as happy here as they would be when left to the indifference of a drunken husband in a large strange town. She had up to this time manifested strong desires to reach her husband. Now, when Mark Gibson had come out of his way to endeavour, for her sake, to bring about the realisation of these desires, the treatment which she had received from her husband rose up in all its painful lights before her. She hesitated again to trust herself to him who had so shamefully unmanned himself and deceived her. The spirit of the woman wrestled with that of the wife and mother. The struggle was close and keen. Mark Gibson had no conception of the nature of those feelings which agitated her. He noticed that since he had seen her, twelve months ago, a great change had taken place. Those large eyes were brighter and more prominent ; her form was bent, and her entire figure gave evidence of "a heart with grief opprest." But who could tell (could she herself, even,) what were the various thoughts which broke in upon her as she sat looking back upon a life spent as hers had been ? Yet her woe, and the woe of millions now, had been brought about by that one agency of evil—intoxicating drink. Could she be assured of the sobriety of her husband all would

yet be well, and she had still that confidence. It was drink that had led him away, drink that kept him away. The demon that led him the same bound him and blinded him. Could he by any means be extricated from the thralldom of drink he might yet become himself; they might yet rejoice in the happiness which once they did. Oh! how earnestly and affectionately were all these thoughts, and more, pressed upon the attention of Mark Gibson.

Mrs. Birkett, however, gradually yielded to the wariness and tact of the noble-minded mason, and her consent was given. She would go—she had made it a special matter of meditation, had taken a night to consider it, and haggard indeed she did look when she told Mark that her main consideration in yielding was the welfare of her son Harry.

“As for John Birkett,” said she, “I fear he is now far beyond any influence I can bring to bear upon him. He must be that, or how could he remain away? Even his children seem to fail in attracting him to his home. But I am greatly encouraged by what you say with reference to Harry. God grant that he may prove all you say, which will, indeed, be a consolation to me and a blessing to himself.”

“Thank you, thank you,” said Mark, in the kindest tone and in the richest of Scotch accents.

"We will no talk much just now. You just keep yourself quiet, and leave the making ready to me. I'll manage all finely, and there will be no occasion for you to rue this resolve of yours. Now notice my words."

It was very desirable that Mark should reach Riverside by the quickest route. It was equally desirable that Mrs. Birkett and family should reach it by the cheapest. Time was money to Mark; nothing was money but hard cash in Mrs. Birkett's circumstances. There was a ship-builder in Poebeck, his descendants are there yet, and long may they continue to prosper and progress! This ship-builder had sent out from his yard many fine vessels; Poebeck was very proud of them, as it had every right to be. The vessels turned out well and profitable for builders and owners, and the smiles of fortune did not parch or dry up the better tissues of the carpenter's heart. When he had a new vessel ready for sea, it was sent over to the great port of Riverside, and he made it known in Poebeck that if there were any poor men or families who wished to remove and try their luck in the great town, they might, in this new vessel, have a free passage, which would enable them to secure a new start in life. Mark Gibson had heard of this during a conversation with old Brill and his wife. He lost no time

in making inquiries. There had been a launch some time before, it might be the vessel had not set off. Much to the joy of Gibson he discovered that a fine vessel, a barque, one of the largest which had been built at Poebeck, would be ready for sea in a few weeks. Taking Harry with him, Gibson went off to the ship-builder's house, was well received, told his errand in few words; and after the circumstances of the Birkett family had been explained, the old man at once wrote out an order for their passage to Riverside by his new ship. "I hope they will all be good sailors," said the old carpenter, "for I think with the weather we are likely to have in the Channel the vessel will pitch a good deal, and I don't care to put much ballast in her."

Mrs. Birkett was overpowered on Mark's return. She had never heard of the ship-builder's kindness before. She had heard of him being a keen man, and a sharp master. All the dark sides of his character were often talked of; no one cared to show the bright side.

Mark, having made what arrangements he thought would secure Mrs. Birkett's comfort during the voyage, set off by coach. He hoped to reach Riverside and learn something of John Birkett before the family arrived. The vessel was ready before

Mrs. Birkett expected, and the old ship-carpenter called on her, much to her surprise, to inform her of the time she must go on board. He asked many questions as to her native dale, her parents, how long she had been left; and after these had been answered, Harry, who was helping his mother to pack what few articles of furniture they intended to take, underwent a running fire of questions. The old man had slipped half-a-crown under the large Bible which lay on the table ready for packing, and it was found there soon after he had left the room.

At four o'clock next morning Mrs. Birkett and her family sailed from Poebeck in that fine new barque. The parting with friends was very painful. Mrs. Birkett got below as soon as she could; and when the men on deck were running, pulling, shouting and singing—

“Cheerily, cheerily, away we go,
For Riverside, boys, we're off yeo.”

the forsaken wife had gathered her children around her, and was in earnest prayer commending them to the safe keeping of Him whom the winds and the sea obey, and who holds the waters as if in the hollow of his hand. Harry soon knew what it was to go down to the sea in ships and have business on the great waters.

CHAPTER XVI.

ARRIVAL AT RIVERSIDE.

“It is in giving thought and labour, that we may often make the greatest and the most profitable sacrifices for the good of others.”

THE great dock-works at Riverside were “done by contract.” There was in those days less respectability associated with the profession of a contractor than is found now; baronets or members of parliament were not found in the class. The business was in its infancy; and if some contractors were more scrupulous than others, that was all which could be said in their favour. At Riverside a contractor took a portion of the works; he wished to lead an easy life, and therefore sub-let his contract to some shrewd but needy man. The contractor was responsible to the corporation for the proper execution of the work, and it therefore

required that the sub-contractors should be looked after. Many of the contractors were men of substance. The sub-contractors wished to be so, and adopted many schemes more ingenious than creditable in order to advance themselves.

Mark Gibson had been engaged by a leading contractor to look after the works, and see that the "subs" did their work properly. The situation was not a pleasant one; yet to a man like Mark, who never frequented the public-house, and in consequence never by any chance was thrown into the society of the sub-contractors, the duty was comparatively light. It was not always "real ability, backed and upheld by education" which took the man from the pick and spade, or mallet and chisel, and advanced him to the rank of sub-contractor. It was not always plodding industry, combined with pleasant manners. These qualities tell more now than they did then in any class of life. A man who wheeled a barrow at the Riverside works has since that given £180,000 for an estate. He was a man of no education, his manners were not pleasing, he had nothing to recommend him in the eyes of men, but he had a natural aptitude for making calculations. He could tell almost at a glance what weight of soil there was in a given space, and how many men it would take to remove it in a given time.

He could handle the pick and spade well, would wheel a barrow over the narrowest plank, or drink ale for a wager with any one. Educated men, men with brains and theories, got hold of this man with his rude strength and practical knowledge, they took out of him all they wanted. They never cared to give him anything in return but cash. He got plenty of this; his tastes would not allow him to take much else, and in his way he enjoys it. There is a far higher and nobler object in life than the accumulation of wealth. Sub-contractors in the days spoken of did not seem to think so. Education might not, in all probability, have infused the peculiar aptitude for their profession. A strict adherence to the precepts of the moral law might have made them no less rich. They got what they sought without either, and what men know little about or never have, they seldom feel the loss of. Indeed, then, as now, if men will make haste to be rich the snare is at hand. Once they are on the line (leaving out of the question how they get on), and feel themselves going at a tolerable speed, neither religion (so called), morals, nor education, is found able to put on the break!

One of the schemes for making money set in operation by the sub-contractors at the Riverside works was that of establishing "tommy-shops."

Men were paid wages every fortnight ; the alternate week, or, indeed, often during each week, they obtained "tommy tickets." These tickets represented so much money, generally five shillings, and were convertible into bread or groceries at certain shops fixed on by the sub-contractors. Take the case of a mason ; the system would act thus. He worked by piece ; his work would be measured, checked, and passed for the first fortnight on Thursday afternoon. He would have earned fifty to sixty, sometimes eighty shillings. The latter was exceptional ; take it at fifty shillings. Instead of obtaining this in hard cash, so that he might lay it out to the best advantage, he would have obtained during the week or fortnight perhaps eight tommy tickets. If he were a married man he was sure to have done so, so that he would now have only ten shillings to receive. To receive this ten shillings he would have to sit for several hours in a public-house. He was not likely to sit there without drinking. All the drink he consumed was "put down to him," and when the sub-contractor or paymaster appeared the settlement of the "ale score" was the first business done. A masons' "strike" against such a state of things could be well understood by any one had it taken place.

The shops fixed on by the sub-contractors were

often most inconveniently situated, and generally miserably stocked. The assortment of goods was not great, the quality always inferior. Yet such as they were, poor people found themselves compelled to take them, knowing at the same time that they were charged the highest price "for the poorest stuff." The sub-contractor had a commission from the shopkeepers, and the shopkeeper made up this by "victimising" the working-man and his family. Then the giving of tickets for a fixed sum—for instance, five shillings, was attended with great disadvantage, nay, inflicted injury and positive loss upon the "tommy shop" supporters. It is true every person was supplied with a book, and everything obtained at the shop was supposed to be put down, but how few *could read* what was written: in the case of working-men's wives the proportion was very small. Beyond this, look at the nicety of calculation required when tea, coffee, flour or bread, sugar, &c., &c., were all wanted out of a five-shilling tommy ticket! The supplying of a household in this peddling way, besides creating annoyance, leads to habits of extravagance. Odd pence are frittered away on things not always useful or necessary, in order "to make the tommy ticket square." There is no inducement held out to man or woman to save a penny, every ruse adopted to make them

spend to the uttermost farthing. Children in most cases would be sent for the goods, and the shopkeepers would give them just what suited their own convenience. The children would not be oppressed with good living, and knew very well unless they got food from the tommy shop they might go without. Hence they took care to carry home "anything they could get for the ticket." It was not in the much abused factory districts where this system prevailed: devil's dust was unknown in Riverside. Men became rich by the adoption of this system. From wielding the pick they took to keeping a public-house or keeping a tommy shop; they fattened on the ill-gotten gains. But a brighter day dawned on the working population. The groans of the poor reached the palaces!

Mark Gibson had not been many days in Riverside before he discovered John Birkett, and had learned enough of the tommy-shop system to convince him that he would not be doing his duty to his employers, to himself, or his fellow-workmen, without he took every occasion to show in its true light the evils which attended or were consequent upon it. Gibson was not a bombastic talker, who learned off long strings of great and loud-sounding words and blated them in the ears of his fellows with a nasal twang as if they were wrung from his

heart; he did good without pretending to it; yes, and without being paid for it. If a judicious hint, or a kind word, or a friendly action would assist, encourage, or help any one around him, he gave it, said it, or did it. The work was done for the very work's sake. He was not a "phlegmatic Scotchman," although he, like many more of his people and kindred, was frequently called such. He was not, on the other hand, impulsive. He did not do good "by fits and starts," sowing very good seed one day and expecting the blade at least to appear the next: then, if what he expected did not appear when he expected it, pulling it up by the roots whenever it did. What he expected as the result of what he did, no one ever heard him say. If good appeared after many days he would smile very pleasantly when he heard of it, and anyone who played draughts with him for the next few evenings might expect to be cleverly but "triumphantly defeated."

Birkett was not employed by any of the sub-contractors over which Gibson had control. He was at some works at the old docks, some alterations, enlargement and repairs. He was, however, a victim of this "tommy-shop system," and made this the basis of his defence for not sending money to his wife and family. He hardly ever saw money. Whatever wages he earned were either eaten up or

drank off. Gibson could see that Birkett was only too glad to get anything like a valid excuse for his neglect, and much as he saw of the evils of the system he could not see anything which would keep a man in such a state of thralldom as was represented. He listened to all that Birkett urged, but said little in reply. Why he had left Hazel, why place himself in such a position, Gibson did not vex by such vain words. The evil was done; atonement for past neglect could only be made by present exertion and future attention; besides, he felt how weak it would be to try and triumph, or seem to triumph, over a man in Birkett's position. His brother had been weak, miserably weak and foolish; would chiding him for his weakness and folly increase his moral strength, or add to his wisdom? With a man of Birkett's temperament sympathy would be more likely to win him than aught else. Not that Gibson would conceal the truth by consoling him under the trials amongst which he had chosen his lot; or attempt in the slightest degree to justify the course Birkett had pursued. No! but he might be sympathised with so far as to be helped out of it; or he might be shown the way to extricate himself. It is one mode of doing good (so some think) to tell people roundly what great fools they have been, what opportunities

they have missed, what troubles they have brought upon themselves, and what miserable wretches they are. There is another way; not to overlook what people have been altogether, but to show what they might become and what they ought to become by showing what should be the great object of their life. Gibson was a disciple of the latter school. He knew and felt how unjust Birkett had been to himself and family; he knew, too, that no one was so likely to feel this, and no one could possibly know it better than Birkett himself. Gibson had got to that length in liberalism that he believed many men had brains besides himself. If all men could be got that length there would be more charity practised and less talked.

Gibson was very careful in the conversation with Birkett not to allude to the fact that the family from Poebeck were on the way to Riverside. He had seen them all, had taken Harry to his mother, had been much impressed with the altered appearance of Mrs. Birkett, had promised to make inquiries for her respecting her husband; this he, in reply to Birkett, told him, but nothing more. Birkett felt inclined, as he told Gibson, to go back to Poebeck, and would have done so ere this, but he was ashamed. Drink had led him to do wrong—to do wrong to his own flesh and blood, and drink made

him ashamed to do right. The world—the world of the drunkard, which is a large place just now—is filled with anomalies analogous to this. Birkett did not say or think this, but the fact is so, nevertheless.

Mark had written to Mrs. Birkett as soon as ever he found out Birkett's address, and when the ship in which the Birkett family was had cleared the headland of Poebeck, Mrs. Brill had written to Gibson informing him of the fact. Old Brill, who knew something of Riverside, had told her to say when the vessel might be expected, according to the bearings that he had taken, and telling Gibson, moreover, where he was to inquire if he wanted to know what ships were signalled off the port. Mrs. Birkett and her family were almost three days on their passage. The ship was tossed about a great deal, and the winds were unfavourable. The captain was a very good old rough sailor, who cursed the children for crying, and gave them biscuits and bread in abundance. Harry enjoyed the tossing for a while, but it became monotonous and wearisome; and then he, with the other children, was so sick as to remember very little or nothing of the passage. On the evening of the third day the ship entered the river on the banks of which Riverside was built, and the children were allowed to come on deck.

The long line of docks skirted the river, and a forest of masts rose up, behind which the towers and spires of churches, tier on tier of warehouses, and the great town itself, lay half-concealed by smoke. What strange feelings rose up in the mind of Harry Birkett as he looked on this and thought of what kind, good, brave Mark Gibson had said to him about it. He thought of again meeting with Mark, his companion through the winter, his careful teacher, his greatest opponent at draughts. There seemed to be no grand heather-covered hills about Riverside over which they could roam together, or on which they could lay down whilst Mark explained his views of a man's life and works by the unceasing labour of the little insects around him.

How different were the thoughts of Mrs. Birkett when, standing near the bulwarks, she supported the boy whose day dream ran on so smoothly. She saw the town and trembled at the sight. In Mark Gibson's integrity, in his desire for her son's welfare, she had the most implicit confidence; that was clear to her, no cloud ever rose before it; that, too, was her strong hope, her greatest inducement to leave Poebeck. But her husband, where was he? Would he meet her, or would he, like a guilty man that he was, shun her gaze? Ah, dear!

The stream ran very high, the vessel could not

go into the dock, but the gruff little captain very good-naturedly offered to run the family ashore in his own boat. They had had enough of the sea, he should think, it was no place for women and babies; if they liked he would lower the boat and put them ashore now. His offer was accepted, and mother, children, and what articles of furniture they had, were all lowered in the boat. The waves by the ship's side tossed the gig fearfully.

"Hold on there!" roared the little captain; "here's a small bag of biscuit and a bit of beef to stop the mouths of those youngsters. Heave off."

In a quarter of an hour they were all standing on the pier head at Riverside, wet through with the waves washing over them, but thankful to find themselves with the beaming face of an old friend bearing towards them.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WIFE'S RECEPTION.

“The cruelties permitted on the earth, present an awful idea of the general freedom of action entrusted to mankind.”

It was evening when the family, guided by their faithful friend Gibson, reached the house where John Birkett lodged. As they passed through the town the children were interested and excited by many things met with. Everything was new to them. The docks, along the quays of which they passed, were marvellous. To think of hundreds of ships, most of them larger than they had ever seen, being packed so closely in, and kept afloat whilst they were being filled or discharged. Why, Poebeck was a great place. Many vessels were there, yet when the tide was out the harbour was dry. But how compare Poebeck to this? Then the houses, the horses, and the warehouses, how large they looked. Horses were here dragging loads almost as much as a Poebeck warehouse would contain. What crowds of people were continually passing in the streets, and how different in manners and

appearance were these to the "town's folk" the children had been used to. Harry had a large bundle to carry; the weight of this never seemed to affect him, so much was his attention drawn off by passing objects. He had thought of seeing his father, and wondered what sort of a meeting that would be; but he thought nothing of this now. As Gibson led his mother on, Harry and his sisters, now walking, now running, followed closely up, thinking what a vast place Riverside was, and how very little a boy like him looked in it.

The lodging of Birkett was in a narrow crooked street leading from one of the quays. It was close by where he worked, so that he could get home to meals. The houses hereabouts presented no improvement on those which the family had been accustomed to in Poebeck. They were smaller, not so well lighted, and not so clean. There appeared to be sailors' lodging-houses close by. Sailors half dressed were lounging about, smoking. Signs presented themselves over almost every cellar, "Cooking for shipping;" and very stout young women, in very loose attire, were behaving in a riotous manner at the door of a small public-house.

"I'm no ways pleased with the lodgings John has chosen," said Mark Gibson to Mrs. Birkett, as they approached the narrow entrance of the court

up which Birkett lived. "He tells me that the people who keep that dirty beggar-making shop," which he persists in calling the inn, "were known to him years ago" (with what a rich Scotch burr, and with what terrible earnestness, he spoke this). "That, as I told him, was the very reason, above all, why he should avoid the place as he would a pestilence. They recommended him to the lodgings he now occupies; to be sure, what else were they likely to do? When the man gets home at night there is no chance, in such a lodging, of his having one quiet hour; where, then, is he so likely to go as to these friends of his? We shall see John, I hope, presently, and you and I must prevail on him to get out of this place."

As they passed what Gibson most truly designated the beggar-making shop, Mrs. Birkett looked at the name on the sign, and a heavy sigh escaped her. Yes! John had got amongst old companions. The man who kept this house had broken his wife's health, and eventually her heart, by his conduct and usage; had been obliged to leave the village, into such disrepute had he fallen, and here he was doing what was termed "a roaring trade," assisted by another wife, who dressed more gaily, and was less scrupulous as to the means which they adopted for making money; it was not likely that Birkett could

have any money to send away for the support of his family whilst thus circumstanced.

Birkett's landlady was much surprised when Gibson presented himself with Mrs. Birkett and the children. It could not be ! John had never said anything about his wife ; he had never said anything of his family. He had not come home, might be an hour or two ; she had no accommodation for wife and children there ; and spoke in such a way as if she would take no trouble in trying to seek it either. Gibson, therefore, took his charge away to a friend's house some distance off, up the town, where they obtained necessary refreshment, and then, Mrs. Birkett, leaving the babe in charge of her daughter, set out with Harry and Mark in search of her husband. She was nerved now by what she had seen, and was determined that Gibson's good-nature should not be trespassed on for that which her husband could be made to supply.

Birkett had not reached home : but the landlady was now a little more communicative. They might find him at the "Randybow-house"—it was just round the corner. There were a good many sailors frequented the place, and dancing, of which Birkett was fond, was a favourite evening's diversion amongst them. They turned the corner of the dirty street, and Mrs. Birkett was shocked with the language and

manners of the women that thronged the footpaths. Gibson was somewhat amused when he found that the "Randybow-house" was none other than the Rendezvous for sailors about to enter his Majesty's navy. Gibson entered the place, requesting Mrs. Birkett and her son to stand outside. He looked round the several apartments, all of which were filled with men and women in various stages of intoxication. He could not see Birkett, and was coming out, when his attention was called to the circumstance of a man's head resting on the table in the bar parlour. There were several sailors present, one of whom was rolling the head about, and from the peculiar position in which Gibson stood when looking at the spectacle, he could not understand how the body was placed, to which the head belonged.

"Do you mean to tell me," said the sailor, addressing the sailors, "that this man's head is any use to him? Look here!" and he moved the head from side to side; "why, the fellow's head might as well be off."

A loud roar of laughter followed this extremely pleasant remark, and the company took another swig at their grog, as if they were doing everything requisite to keep their heads in the right place.

During the last turn of the head Gibson recog-

nised the features of John Birkett. He stepped in, asked the men if they knew the fellow-creature to whom they were offering such indignity. No; they knew nothing of him but this: He was very good company when half-seas over, but a little sup of grog sent him to leeward, and then he was a fool or asleep. He was lively enough an hour ago, had danced a hornpipe on a table, and won some wagers by it. Drink then overhauled him, and there he was.

Gibson strove to arouse Birkett, but to no purpose. He feared to distress Mrs. Birkett by keeping her standing outside in the company which usually congregated about the "Randybow-house," and he dreaded more still to inform her of the state in which her husband was to be seen. What could he do? What ought he to do? Tell her the truth? Certainly, he said to himself, I must do that. Yet I may exercise some discretion in the terms I use when doing it.

"Well, any success, Mr. Gibson?" said Mrs. Birkett, as she saw Mark elbowing his way through the noisy, drunken crew, which jabbered and blasphemed at the door of the rendezvous, and under the flag which bore the words, "God save King George the Fourth."

"Not much success," replied Mark.

“Is he not there?”

“In one sense he is, in another he is not. John Birkett as you have known him, or as I have known him, is not there. I am sorry to say he is drunk, and is not in that state that it would do you any good to talk with him. You had better come away, and I will try and make some arrangement for your resting to-night; in the morning I will see John, and he will perhaps be ready to take some sort of charge of you all.”

“You are very kind,” replied Mrs. Birkett. “I am deeply grateful to you, but when you think that eight months have passed since I saw the father of my children—him who once was everything to me in this world—you will not, I am sure, be surprised when I tell you that I cannot, now that I know he is here, depart without seeing him. It may be that I shall mourn to see him, Mr. Gibson; it may wring my heart and drive sleep away from my eyelids; yet I feel as if nothing would do but I must see him. Do, Mr. Gibson, take me to my husband.”

Harry felt his mother's hand tremble violently as she spoke. He noticed, too, how much agitated Mark appeared. It was very unusual to see Gibson's equanimity disturbed.

“What I do, or what I wish you to do, Mrs. Birkett, is what I think and believe will be for your

good; and, much as I sympathise with you, I can in no way see that it will add in any way to your comfort if you should see your husband as I saw him just now. However, you seem to have made up your mind in such way that nothing can well surprise you, and therefore as you wish it I will take you both in."

"Thank you, thank you," said Mrs. Birkett, more earnestly. They went into the Rendezvous, entered the little parlour, and Birkett was in the same position as Mark had left him, his arms hanging beneath, his head resting on the table; pipes, pewter pots, jugs, glasses—his head lay in the midst of these.

Gibson looked round at the company as he entered; they appeared to be all sailors. He held Mrs. Birkett's arm, and in a very impressive manner addressed the company:—

"Now, men, you appear to be all English tars; men whose boast it is that they never were appealed to in vain when a fellow-creature was in distress; will you listen to me for a moment?" There was a fire in Mark's eye, a warmth in his manner, which would have told upon any assembly less enthusiastic than the tars. Listen to him, to be sure they would, this they unhesitatingly declared.

"You saw me in here just now, when I inquired if you knew anything of this man who is now help-

lessly drunk. (He laid his hand on Birkett's head as he spoke.) I had come in search of him, not on my own account, but for the sake of his wife and family. His wife has not seen him for many months past, she is here with me now. If her feelings should overcome her at seeing her husband rendered thus senseless, be men, that is all I ask you to be. This is a grievous sight for you, Mrs. Birkett, and for you too, Harry, my boy," said Mark, turning to mother and son.

Mrs. Birkett was in no way overcome. She seemed, when she had determined to enter the house, as if another, a stronger, a more fearless and resolute spirit had taken possession of her.

The sailors were sensibly impressed with Mark's address, and as Mrs. Birkett caught hold of her husband's hand and shook him, trying to bring back or arouse the drowned senses, one of them jumped up, saying, "Come, lads, lend a hand here." Others then arose, and amongst them John Birkett was lifted up, put to lean against the wall, and thus, after his temples had been bathed, consciousness was partially restored. He stared very wildly about, until his eyes rested on his wife and son. "Jane, Jane. Yes, it is her!" and he cried out and leaped up as if to grasp her; but the demon who had taken possession of him again asserted his

power, and Birkett would have fallen but for Gibson, who was by his side.

The sailors offered to take Birkett home. This offer was accepted, and he was taken away, Gibson seeing that he was placed in bed before he left him. Then he went with Mrs. Birkett, and secured for her and her family comfortable lodgings for the night. He would see them in the morning, and went sorrowfully away.

When the children were asleep, Harry sat with his mother. She did not care to go to bed, neither did the boy, although she wished him. There was not much to expect from father. What were they to do? Much as Mrs. Birkett had thought of meeting her husband, many times as she had revolved in her own mind what she might say to him, or how he might receive her, she had never once thought of meeting him stupidly drunk. No. Although she knew he was given up to drink, yet she had never brought herself to think that, after this long absence from each other, he would have to be supported whilst he muttered her name.

There is something very painful and very shocking in the spectacle of a man who has, to gratify a merely sensual feeling, deprived himself of reason and of speech. Some people, yes, women, in every class of life, have to look upon it, and the man they

have to look upon is the man whom once they loved, and whom they are still expected to love, cherish, and obey. Add to the painful feelings which such a spectacle would produce, the former life Mrs. Birkett had led, the shameful manner she had been deserted, what her hopes may have been, what her anticipations of this meeting may have been, then some idea may be formed of what her feelings were that night, in a strange house, in a strange town, and four children dependent upon her. The most painful feature of all in the consideration of such a case is, that it is by no means exceptional. It is common; yes, very common, so common as to become almost unheeded.

That was a long dreary night for Mrs. Birkett; she had spent many weary nights and days; this being the last, was most acutely felt. Day at last dawned; morning, a fine warm summer's morning, greeted the well-nigh worn-out wife. With the joyous morning came Mark Gibson, equally joyous, bringing with him John Birkett. Oh! how her heart did beat after all, as her husband took Harry by the hand, patted his head, and smiled upon him. Then when he extended his hand to his wife, saying, he felt as if he was unworthy of her recognition, how tenderly was he met. The mother's eyes were hid, as the children clustered around father's knee.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FRIGHTFUL EXAMPLE.

“ To rush into a fixed eternal state
Out of the very flames of rage and hate.”

It is sometimes sneeringly told, with reference to the early advocates of Temperance principles, that in order to present before the audiences a true picture of the effects of intoxicating drink they were in the habit of exhibiting some well-known drunkard as a “frightful example.” A man well known and thoroughly degraded was made publicly to declare his fallen condition. It was no fancy sketch. Drink was made to condemn itself. If this were true it would not be surprising; but whilst denying the truth it is not wise to overlook the suggestion which the sneer contains. Men who oppose a just cause not unfrequently by their inconsistency furnish unconsciously the best arguments in support of what they would fain condemn.

In this instance the sneer tells tenfold against the sneerer. There appears to have been as little necessity to adopt such a practical mode of illustrating the effects of drunkenness in the early stages of the Temperance movement as there is unfortunately now. Examples abounded on every hand. No class of society was thirty years ago free from the devastation caused by drink. Good men regretted this. Ministers were said to "mourn" over it. What this "mourning" may have been then can perhaps be judged by what it is now. Those who mourn seldom do anything else, and they expect this mourning to cover a multitude of sins. A man who sees day after day one and another of his friends, perhaps companions, perhaps relations, giving way to temptation, going on from step to step until they plunge into that fatal flood of intoxication which is rolling on, leaving desolation and ruin in its course—the man who sees this and only mourns is culpably negligent, and fails to discharge a high yet noble duty. If instead of mourning he were to abstain, and by every means in his power induce others to do likewise, he would act the better part. This would never be taken away from him, and its effects would tell upon him and others when all tears are wiped away from the eyes. This mourning over transgressions and resting thereon has

been the stumbling-block to thousands, and is more clearly seen in the matter of drink than anything else. No one has any need to look much beyond his own nose for an illustration—yes, for a “frightful example.”

If mourning himself, or causing other people to mourn, by reason of his intemperate habits, would have made John Birkett a steady man, long, long ago he might have rejoiced in that character. If “frightful examples” were possessed of a tithe of the power which some seemed inclined to attribute to them, he would have been the sober husband and father of a happy family. It was quite apparent to any one that Birkett regretted his past conduct. He felt abased when looking at himself; but he had not the moral courage or power whilst feeling this abasement to resolve, firmly and at once, to cut off the right-hand sin. He had examples before him; yes, the most frightful any man could possibly look upon—himself! Beyond this, again and again, in the most terrible manner, were the dangers and fatal consequences of the drunkard’s life brought before him, to little purpose. He had just been rescued from the jaws of death. Had not Gibson fortunately rescued him from that drunkard’s den, the Rendezvous, in all probability he might have slipped off into eternity *drunk*. Awful, indeed

as the thought is, how frequently do such judgments occur ! Gibson had taken an early opportunity of showing Birkett this in his quiet manner; and whilst Birkett admitted the dangerous position in which he was placed, and trembled at the consequences involved, yet so nervous did the bare possibility of such a scene make him, that he must call and have a glass, "just to keep him up." Such is life, such the sensibility of the drunkard !

The house where Birkett had taken apartments for his family was in a street close by where the coaches started from. A coachman kept the house ; he drove "to London in three days," with such wonderful rapidity did people travel in these times. Travellers of all sorts came to lodge at his house, every day brought new forms and faces. Birkett took possession of his apartment on Saturday night. The house was very full. Before ten o'clock the landlady came in to Mrs. Birkett to request that she would give up one bed-room, as friends had come in late by coach whom she was anxious to oblige. It was ultimately arranged that John Birkett and Harry should go to sleep in the attic, and Mrs. Birkett and the children would do with one room, the other was to be at the service of the last comers. To reach the attic John and his son had to pass through the bed-room which

they had given up. Several times during the evening Birkett and his family had been disturbed by the riotous conduct of a young man below-stairs. He was said to be a very nice young man, but got on the spree sometimes, came away from home, stayed here and spent all he had, got into debt, and then wrote to his friends to extricate him ; this they had done several times. He had been here now for a fortnight, his money had been spent, the best of his clothes were pawned, he was in debt to the landlady, for meat and borrowed money ; had written to his relations, and had met with a rebuff. He was wild. He brandished a knife over the heads of the lodgers ; threatened the landlady with summary execution, and conducted himself in such a manner as to terrify peaceable people. Mrs. Birkett was greatly alarmed, but the landlady allayed her fear by saying she would get him to sleep directly, she had sent for the rum. He did become quieter, and the Birketts went off to rest.

Sunday morning—Harry's first Sunday morning in this great town of Riverside ! How he watched for the morning, on which his father had promised him an early walk by the banks of the river. When the sun threw his bright gleams into the attic John Birkett arose, and Harry with him. They made as little noise as possible, fearing to

disturb people at such an early hour. They made their way down-stairs, and were passing through the bed-room below, when Birkett stumbled over something. The curtain was down, the light in the room was dim. Telling Harry to stay on the stairs a moment, Birkett gently drew up the window-blind, when a frightful spectacle presented itself. There lay the maudlin drunkard of the night before in a pool of his own blood; he was on his left side, the right hand was extended and clasped a large carving knife. His throat was cut most completely, the head being almost severed from the body. There was an imbecile grin upon his features, and his large eyes, wide open, met those of Harry Birkett as the boy ran to cling to his father's hand. There were two beds in the room: on one the victim of intemperance had been laid down; on the other lay two young men who had come in by the last coach, and, being tired with their journey, were now fast asleep. The landlady had sent for the rum; the poor desperate drunkard had partaken of it. She said she would make him quiet. He was quiet enough now!

Not a word escaped from father or son whilst they looked on this appalling sight. They both were terror-stricken, and could not speak. Birkett's firmness of nerve had been tampered with. In

former days he could have faced anything without dismay. Death had now terrors for him, and with death in this form these were increased. Harry had never seen death before. He had read, had been told, had imagined to himself the appearance of death. Oh! how his limbs did shake, and yet he could not keep his eyes off those of the self-murderer.

Birkett sought the landlady first of all, and allowed her to act as she thought best. The house was soon in an uproar, and what Harry remembered more distinctly than any other of the occurrences of that morning was his mother's prayer. The boy thought, too, that when his father rose from his knees the tears were stealing down his cheeks. As for Harry and his sisters, they sobbed out their thankfulness, as his mother, in simple, tender, yet impassioned language, called to mind the deliverances of the past week, more especially that of the past night, and earnestly pleaded that her husband and kindred might be graciously preserved from the drunkard's doom. That Sunday was spent very quietly. There were no walks; no friends calling in to chat. Death was in the house, and his presence anywhere spreads around a feeling of stillness and awe. Mark Gibson called in the evening. Much as he was impressed with the

tragedy, he was not prevented reading aloud a sermon on malt, by Dr. Dodd, which he had met with in a volume of tracts during the week.

Harry was soon got to work at his old business of tool-carrying, and the first twelve months at Riverside passed, on the whole, rather pleasantly than otherwise. His father did not abstain altogether from drink, but he was better than usual. Gibson had been urging that Harry should be got into some other situation, but Birkett felt that the boy was useful in a pecuniary sense, more useful now than he would be in any other situation, and he therefore hesitated to make any change. Birkett ultimately left the dock-works, and, not being desirous to leave the boy amongst strangers, he took him away, and Harry had a week or two to look about him.

He soon grew tired of walking about, obtained permission from his father to look out for a shop, which was granted, and his spirits revived at the thoughts of "beginning the world in Riverside, and beginning it as he liked." He saw, as he passed shops, bills in the window—"An Errand-boy wanted," and shop after shop he went in to ask would he suit. "Too little," "too young," "not strong enough," always something against him: still he felt some opening would occur soon.

There was now an election in the town. Harry did not know much about it. Some of the boys in the street where he lived said they were for "red"—others said they were for "blue." "True blue for ever;" Harry liked that, and was therefore a true blue! The election was held in the principal street of the town. It caused a deal of excitement. Many shops near the polling-place were closed, but the public-houses were all open, and doing a good run of business, too. Bands of music passed to and fro in the street heading up the voters, all freemen, particularly free just now—men who would not think of going up to vote until they were properly prepared. Many of "the tallies" were taken out of public-houses where they had been obtaining the necessary preparation for the polling-booth. How drunk they were. Some of them could not stand; walking was quite out of the question; and the fine gentlemen who assisted them up, the captains of these great hosts, how they did laugh. *Blue* and *Red*, as to drinking or conduct, there was little choice. The reds were said to be all "swells," the true blues were "Quakers, infidels, and all other scum of the earth," so the bills on the walls told people. Day after day the music played, the freemen drank, swore, and voted. The contest was very severe; men now offered themselves for sale.

Being freemen, were they not fully justified in doing what they liked with their own? The highest bidder bought them, drove them to the public-house, decorated them with favours, made them drunk, polled them, and tried to forget what manner of men they were. After seven days spent in these doings, the election was said to be drawing to a close. Harry Birkett, in search of a shop or employment of any sort, had wandered after a band of music belonging to the "true blues," and now found himself on the eighth day of the election standing near the polling-booth at two o'clock in the day. The street was crowded with people, blues on one side, reds on the other, strong barriers between the parties, and the polling-booth in front. A long cheer burst from the blues; it was taken up by the crowd, and carried down the length of the street. An hour had elapsed, the reds had not been able to beg, steal, borrow, or buy another "tally." The blues must now go in and win. "Make way, make way." The band plays "See the Conquering Hero comes;" the crowd on the blue side opens up, and thirty men, "three tallies," yes, thirty men, well-dressed, broad-set, stern men, walked up to the polling-booth. These were some of the "Quakers, infidels, and all other scum of the earth." How the blues roared, how

the reds groaned; well they might, they were beaten. The election was over, £140,000 had been spent, and Riverside had returned a member to Parliament!

During the excitement Harry Birkett had been as busy as most people, who knew as little about what they were excited for. He shouted, he jumped up and waved a blue ribbon; he hissed like a small serpent whenever he saw a boy with a red ribbon; and why he did it all any one could tell quite as well as himself. During the greatest excitement he had been at a shop-door where were many gentlemen who displayed no colours, but who took much interest in the scene. As the crowd dispersed, the shutters of the shop were lifted down, and Harry read on the window "A shop-boy wanted." He went in; a stout man, very free and hearty, of middle age, but rather bald, came forward.

"Have you been at any shop before?"

"No, sir."

"How do you think you can fulfil the duties?"

"I am willing to do anything, sir."

The gentleman took the boy by the hand, led him to the door where the light was better, looked at him from head to foot, then said—

"Now, if I were to give you a parcel to take out, would you give it to the first person you met?"

“If I was told to do so, I would; not without,” replied Harry.

The master laughed. “Come in to work at eight o’clock to-morrow morning.”

Harry went away in high glee, the election was over and he had got a place. Mark Gibson would be pleased now, so the boy thought as he ran away home to give the glad tidings to his mother.

CHAPTER XIX.

HARRY AT A NEW SCHOOL.

“His object is to show to his people that there is nothing in the nature of their employment, or in the condition of their humble lot, that condemns them to be rough, vulgar, ignorant, miserable, or poor.”

THE situation which Harry Birkett obtained proved to be in every way congenial to his tastes. The master was kind and considerate, and took a great interest in all his boys. Men were employed in the shop, or in the work-rooms, who, many years ago, had come there poor little boys, like Harry was now. If boys would but perform their duty faithfully to the master, they were sure to be met in the right spirit; for the master was certain to fulfil his duty to them. This was told to Harry several times, in a variety of ways, before he had been in the shop a day. The master had been a little ragged boy running wild in the streets of Riverside, and had been caught and trained by a benevolent but eccentric man. His steadiness and

devotion to business had caused him to be noticed by many gentlemen during his apprenticeship. When he was "loose," some of these gentlemen supplied what he wanted—capital, and he was now a thriving tradesman, who never forgot the pit from whence he was digged. He was not "a man of mushroom growth." His progress had been slow and sure. He made no display in his mode of living, and the qualities which had led to his being assisted to mount the ladder remained with him, and were yet being more assiduously cultivated, now that he was so near the top. His father and mother—very humble people—lived in a small cottage at the outskirts of the town, and one of the first messages that Harry was sent to deliver was this : "Here, my little fellow, just you run up to Rupert's Brow, take this note and this basket, bring me word how my father is this morning, and tell my mother I will be sure to call as I go up to dinner."

Harry did literally *run* to do the good man's bidding, and when he saw the old people, and heard the blessings which they poured upon the head of their faithful son, he felt that he was the servant of a good master, and something very like affection for him crept at once into the boy's heart.

By the exercise of good judgment and great

discretion Harry's master was not long before he learned the history of the Birkett family—at least so much of it as enabled him to see in what way he could be most useful to them and the boy. John Birkett had now got his family into a small house—one of a long row in a court—a style of house which set good air and ventilation at defiance, and for which characteristics the homes of working people in Riverside were notorious. Rents were high, and men must be in the town in order to be near their work—such was the reason given. Harry's father had left the dock works, was in a constant situation, but the weather would not permit outdoor occupations to be followed continuously; hence there were many broken weeks. When house-rent, food and clothing for a man, his wife, and five children, have all to be met with an average income of twenty shillings weekly, there should be something like frugality practised if people are to live ever so plainly and keep out of debt. Harry's master, from his own experience, knew this—had, indeed, painfully felt it. Hence, as winter approached, the boy's shoes were looked to, and plain substantial clothing was now and then supplied, and this done in such a manner and with that hearty good-will which enhanced the value of the gift, whilst at the same time the recipient felt no loss of self-respect.

As it was now with Harry so it had been again and again with other boys. All had not rightly valued these acts of kindness. Some had trespassed on good nature, but still the master reaped his reward in being surrounded with willing hands that laboured assiduously in token of the motive power from which their earnestness and diligence was derived.

Not to the body only did Harry's master look. He was a subscriber to a mechanics' and apprentices' library, and secured for his boys and apprentices the privilege of suitable reading for their leisure hours. Books were not then what they are now. There was no "Run and Read Library," no John Cassell, with his incomparable literature for the people. Charles Knight was just getting to work; but the "Penny Magazine" was not yet. "Books were books" then, and were prized accordingly. When the master called Harry into the little back office, and asked him if he would like to take books from the library, take them home to read in the evenings, tears of joy checked the boy's utterance. The thought of such delights was almost more than he could bear.

"Here, now, is your ticket, Harry," said the master. "This will give you the privilege for a month. In the meantime I will call in and see what sort of books you read, and what care you take

of them. If I am satisfied you shall have your ticket renewed. Here is a list of all the books in the library. You will read what the rules are, and mind that you obey them. That will do now, get away to work," said he, as Harry was in vain struggling to express his feelings of thankfulness.

Mark Gibson was rising fast in his profession, and had taken a contract or two on his own account; but he still called in to see the Birketts, and Harry lost no time in telling Mark what sort of a man his master was, and what advantages were now being opened up to him. However joyful Mark might have considered the news, he heard it from Harry without being at all moved. He assisted the boy in the choice of books, and counselled him as to companions. Indeed, on the whole, Harry came away from his interview with Mark somewhat cast down. The brightness of his future was clouded. He expected Mr. Gibson would rejoice as he rejoiced. Instead of that he had to listen to one of Mark's lectures. Harry was not displeased to do so, but he was disappointed. His enthusiasm received a check. Books were fine things, Mark had said, but he could not yet make up his mind as to whether or not they were like all other good and fine things. It was just possible to have too much or too many of them.

The greatest advantage, as it appeared to Mark Gibson, which could arise from Harry having the use of the library, was the occupation it would furnish for his evenings. He did not think the boy would derive that amount of solid information which many suppose to result from early and perhaps indiscriminate reading. The boy was worked hard, and had every day to receive some practical lesson in that most public of all schools—the world. The education of the book or the school had little chance of making progress whilst the boy was striving to make a position for himself. Mark had confidence in the lad's early training, and felt that were he studiously kept for a few years in striving to make himself useful to his employer—in getting to know, as Carlyle says, what his work was, and doing it—then would be the time to give his intellect a further stimulus, and in the mean time his reading would be pastime, and that of a profitable and proper sort. When he got to know his work he would be in a better position of judging what tools he would require. Then there was no doubt he would set about getting them, so that he might indeed become a workman who need not be ashamed.

The library was, notwithstanding Mark's serious lecture, very regularly visited, and the books pro-

cured therefrom greedily "got through." What more could be expected? Older people than Harry Birkett, even in these days, take a pride in "getting through" books, and will speak of the *quantity* in raptures. The fact of their talking so indicates the result attained, and the *quality* need not be named. But reading with Harry was a passion. He rested himself at night by reading, was prepared to battle with the work of to-morrow by being reminded of what brave men, yes, and brave boys, had done years before. Whilst he was reading in his bed-room, or by the fire-side, other boys who worked quite as hard as he did would be in the cheap theatre, at "the show," or in the streets; the habits of the parents, the training of the children, either at school or at home, prepared them to enjoy little else. There was not much virtue in Harry's conduct in this respect; indeed, there may be said to be none. There was no self-denial practised. He was doing that which he dearly loved to do; he was partaking of those joys which were his chief delight. It may be that had Harry been inclined to give way to the temptation of playing with the boys in the court, of rambling after his work through the streets or to the pier-head; of visiting a penny show, or of going on a wet evening into the old woman's cellar, to see how

whisky was made from potato-peelings; had he manifested anything like fondness for these joys of the Riverside youths, his mother, ever-watchful, would have controlled him. But boys whom he worked with, or boys whom he met with on his way home or to work, telling Harry what they did, what they saw, and what they enjoyed, was no temptation to him. He listened to all and looked upon it as "curious." Some day he might think differently, he might wish to see what he now felt it difficult to believe—how boys could find enjoyment in such pastimes, and how their parents would permit them to take part in such vicious pleasures; but just now he was entering on the business of life, and had a glimpse into the world of books. These gave him enough to do.

The assiduities with which Harry laboured to overcome the details of his daily work, led the master to take especial notice of him. The report which had been obtained from the librarian had been such as to secure a renewal of the privilege at the library. The way in which Harry was spoken of by those in authority about the shop led to his being taken as an apprentice, and in due time the indentures were prepared and he was bound. Whilst everything at the shop looked cheering, and his term of servitude rolled pleasantly on, at home

things began to look dismal; Gibson had got into business as a builder, and Birkett was with him as foreman. The intimacy which existed between Gibson and John led the latter to take, perhaps, more liberty in the arrangements or plans for carrying on the business than was either right or prudent. They did not "get on" very comfortably, but the main element in the little misunderstanding which arose was that element which above all others is calculated to create enmity between the best of friends—drink. Birkett would not give it up. No; although a physician had declared to him, and given it as an opinion the result of fifty years' experience and observation, that unless he abstained altogether from drink, his life was in danger; yet drink he would still. He left Gibson's employment, and went to work for a man who made it a point to pay his work-people in a public-house. The house was kept by the master's sister-in-law, who was said to be "a poor widow," and the licence was obtained on the strength of the effect produced on the mind of the magistrates by the exhibition of this "poor widow" and her children being dressed with considerable care, and placed in a good position before "the court." "Nothing could lick a widow" in licensing courts in those days; but a pensioner with medals on his

breast and minus an arm seems to answer the purpose now. At this poor widow's house John Birkett managed to spend the greater portion of his earnings. The misery inflicted at home was now increased tenfold, because the sensibilities of the children had increased. However, the effect produced upon the helpless at home by these outbursts of Birkett were destined soon to come to an end. He had been a strong robust man. Dabbling with drink, and being overcome with it sometimes, latterly every week, did not improve a cough which manifested itself a few months before. One Saturday night there were two or three "footings" to be drunk. New hands had been taken on. In honour of this, and to ensure them happiness and prosperity, the "poor widow" must be patronised, and "the footings" must come in at once. Besides "the footings," two of the hands had been blessed during the week by an increase to their families, and the "heads of the young kids must be wetted for luck." There was more money to spend in drink than they could possibly get through, unless they altered the liquor. "The big jug," which was the term used in speaking of a man paying for the birth of a child, should "come in" in "short stuff." They would be obliged to have some spirits to keep down the ale. This suggestion was acted

upon. The men, in most cases, became helplessly drunk. Birkett did not attempt to reach home until after midnight. On a cold, raw Sabbath morning, Harry Birkett went out to see if he could learn anything of his father. The "poor widow" was in bed. In reply to the knocking at the door, she put her head through the window, and told Harry that "the noisy old fool left here long afore I shut up." Harry eventually found his father in the charge of an old watchman, one of the infirm old men who snoozed in little boxes at the corners of streets, and were supposed to be "watching the town." John Birkett had been lying by the watch-box, and the old man had been disturbed by his "speaking in his sleep." Harry assisted to take his father home for the *last* time.

CHAPTER XX.

SNARES.

"Scepticism, like other things, is enlarged and pampered by indulgence ; as the current gets more sluggish, the water gets thicker."

ALMOST five years of Harry Birkett's apprenticeship had passed when he assisted to take his father home, as detailed in the last chapter. He had been attentive to his business, and was studious in his habits ; but his mother had noticed that his mind had been for some months past unsettled with reference to what she considered "weighty and serious matters." Harry had in early life been accustomed to attend church with his mother. When they first settled at Riverside they found little or no accommodation provided for "poor people" at church, and, therefore, betook themselves to chapel. The Wesleyan Methodists professed more loudly than others to lay themselves out for and preach to the poor. Acting on the

motto of their founder, they considered the world to be their parish, and, consequently, were ever likely to have "the poor" always among them. Mrs. Birkett with her son attended the Wesleyan chapel, and John Birkett said concerning this that "they might attend a worse place."

The foreman at the shop where Harry was serving his time was a shrewd man, who, to a love of philosophical studies had added a fondness for disputation. He was disposed to "doubt" everything and deny anything if by one course or the other he could bring about a discussion. He professed to prove a great many things, yet he believed nothing. He had been a great reader, and had collected (his circumstances considered) a good library. Where he noticed that a boy displayed any taste for reading, he was ever ready to open his storehouse of books, and, as he said, "allow him to take his fill." On religious subjects he was said to hold "loose opinions." "Loose" as these opinions might be, they were very strongly and forcibly expressed, and very tightly held. He maintained that churches and chapels were supported by priestcraft, and that all persons who believed in the authenticity or authority of the Bible were little better than idiots. He could find writers to support his views, and could point out

the inconsistencies and hypocrisy of professing Christians in support of what he advanced. This might be said to be his cardinal point, as it was, indeed, his most favourite method of argument, showing from the inconsistencies and shortcomings of individuals around him that in the matter of religion they really did not, or could not, believe what they so seriously professed. He could not be retaliated upon, so he said, because he made no profession.

Deistical writings with a philosophical garb had for him a peculiar fascination. He was one of those men who profess to keep their minds open for the reception of truth, come from what source it may, yet never seem to have enough of what they seek, and never believe anything whatever, to judge from what they say. He had again and again spoken to Harry as to his reading; urging the danger of allowing his mind to be cramped or pressed into shape by what he termed "the ravings of the black locusts, or the rigmarole of the schools." Harry accepted on many occasions the loan of books from him, and the translation of a French work "On the Mechanism of the Human Body" had staggered the boy a good deal. There was a simplicity and plausibility about the writing which was well calculated to take with youth, and it was from some conversa-

tion with his mother whilst reading this work that Mrs. Birkett saw in what direction her son's mind was being drawn.

The systematic and continuous attacks which were made on all professors of religion by most of Harry's shopmates, led on by the foreman, had begun to tell. The simple story of Christianity, which he had heard and learned from his mother (and which, if clung to with the same childlike simplicity and sincerity with which he had received it, would have formed his tower of refuge), was often doubted. There must be some motive for men holding these so-called religious opinions, some interested, some worldly motive. To be sure there was, to be sure there must be, urged the foreman. The subtle suggestions made to the boy began to act upon him in this way. He and his mother attended with tolerable regularity the ministrations of the Wesleyans. From time to time his mother had been in great distress, in most complete poverty; and these professors, who talked so largely of assisting the poor, feeding the hungry, and visiting the children of affliction or distress, did they ever assist or visit his mother? No, they did not. The leaders amongst them shook hands very warmly with "Sister Birkett" at the chapel door, and patted Harry on the head, and when he grew bigger on the shoulder;

but their good offices ended here, as Harry judged. Having got the boy thus far, the man who was said to hold "loose opinions" must needs conduct him further, and Harry was much inclined to go, but his love for his mother checked him. He had seen her, had been her sole companion in the most painful trials of her life, and in every instance had seen that the simple truths of religion she had taught him had been her strong help in time of trouble. There must be reality in such religion as that, surely.

The perplexities and doubts of Harry might have been somewhat set at rest had they all been revealed to his mother, but he feared to alarm her. She could, however, read in the listlessness which he exhibited when at chapel, and the avidity with which he pointed out inconsistencies of conduct on the part of "brethren," that his self-righteousness was at work. The tares sown at the shop were springing up and bearing fruit.

In addition to the danger to which Harry was exposed at the workshop by the evil communication with subtle and designing men, another and even more insidious had arisen. He had found what he thought, in many respects, a congenial companion for his leisure hours in the person of Jos. Kidd. Josiah, or, as he was usually called, "Jos.," worked

near to where Harry did. They lived within a few doors of each other at one time, and here the intimacy commenced. Jos. had received a better education than most boys in his circumstances, and had been kept at school until he was of age to be apprenticed. He was a lad of good natural powers, his memory was very retentive, and his love of reading was unbounded. There was no check kept upon him by his parents as to what he read, or how. His father had been averse to his remaining so long at school, and his mother thought he might as well have been at work and helping thus to keep himself years before he went to trade. He had an uncle, a sailor, who had risen in his profession, and now had command of a ship. This man felt what education properly directed was calculated to do for a boy, and therefore paid very liberally for the school training of his nephew. His parents set all these things at nought, and left the boy at perfect liberty to obtain what books he liked, and how he could. Their house was kept in a very disorderly manner; and whenever Harry had occasion to call for Jos., he invariably found two or three neighbours chatting with Mrs. Kidd, and the children rolling about the floor in a state of filth unpardonable. Jos. could very seldom have any opportunity of sitting quietly to read at home, for

if his mother were "cleaning up," she knocked and smashed the furniture about in such a fashion, or shouted at and drove the younger children from one corner to another, as most effectually to check any attempt at quiet or serious reading. If she was not "cleaning up" she was "jangling" with neighbours, or would be taking what was termed a "friendly glass" with them. Mr. Kidd had been at one time fond of home, but of late years had taken no pleasure in it, and was rarely seen there, except to eat and sleep. A small "Jerry-shop" at the corner of the court furnished Mr. Kidd and several other neighbours with the only social enjoyments that men could, as they thought, obtain. What their wives had failed to produce, the men, in their folly and despair, here sought, and, as was remarked by Mrs. Birkett, "it was like eating garlic in order to take away the odour of onions."

Jos. and Harry had become close companions before ever either of them ventured to allude to the circumstances of their parents. Jos. was very much depressed one night going home. He had borrowed a "Life of Napoleon" from the library a few days before, and his mother had taken this from out of his little box and pawned it—he suspected for drink. His master had given him some cast-off clothes; these he had got made up so that he

might appear decent on Sunday; but the pawn-broker had secured them, and there was little chance of their being returned. Altogether, "Jos." was very unhappy, and received from Harry just that sort of sympathy which a youth might be expected to give whose mother stood out in such strong contrast to Mrs. Kidd. Harry would speak to his mother, and Jos. might come into their house and sit with him to read. They could work at their tutors together, for Harry still kept up his acquaintance with figures. So it was the friendship of these two boys was cemented, and Harry was led to look on Jos. with almost brotherly affection.

Jos. was very fond of reading novels and romances: the life of a warrior, a pirate, or a robber, had great charms for him also. He had read several histories with remarkable attention, and when Harry and he got out for a ramble Jos. used to astonish Harry by the strength of his memory; still it was the novels and romances of Mrs. Ratcliffe and her imitators which had impressed themselves most durably on the mind of Jos., and he not unfrequently talked in that melo-dramatic style which is supposed to exalt the smallest insignificant and most prosaic affairs of every-day life into the region of poetry. He could not be at Mrs. Birkett's every evening, and he did not care to be at home.

Hence he joined a society of youths who met twice a week in the room of a beer-house, the landlady of which had been kind enough to let them have the use of her room rent free. This society was called "The Kemble Club," and the members met together for the purpose of "studying the drama." It was hoped that by assiduity and attention they might at some future day be able to give a public performance. For the present they would content themselves with study. Most of them spoke of their "lofty aspiration" for the future, and Jos. had told Harry Birkett several times what earnest young men they were. Jos. had been in their society so far as enabled him to speak with true dramatic intonation, and alluded to the time and place of their meeting in the approved fashion. "Yes, my dear boy, when the sun's broad disc has just dipped beneath the western horizon we will assemble and escape from the dull monotony of the world, and breathe the air made pregnant by immortal genius." Reading of romances had fully prepared Jos. to enter such an unreal, bombastic, and dangerous society. Harry laughed at the proceedings as detailed to him by Jos., and vowed that if ever he attended one of their meetings it would but be for idle curiosity; and he never could think that the "interests of the drama," or the "study of the histrionic art," would be promoted

by a dozen or two young men meeting in the upper room of a Jerry-shop twice a week.

Harry was unwilling, though, to break off with Jos. or quit his company. They had been very happy in each other's society for years, and it was with regret that Harry saw Jos. giving way to the companionship of these would-be actors. Not thinking it quite fair to condemn Jos. and his proceedings without seeing what these meetings of "The Kemble Club" consisted of, Harry agreed with Jos. that he would attend one of them; but this engagement could not be fulfilled by reason of John Birkett's sad condition. Harry was just now on the one hand harassed with doubts as to his religious opinions and views of life; on the other Jos., his only companion, besought him to relax some of the strictness in which he had been trained; to add further to his perplexity, his father's conduct had created such an amount of domestic misery as to render his home anything but the abode of peace and contentment.

Such was the mental condition of Harry Birkett when his father was taken home drunk for the last time. The whole family were not unprepared to learn that in all probability he would not again be able to resume his employment. They feared it might be so, still hoped not. Birkett felt that his end was near, and a veil must needs be thrown over

the painful scene which was witnessed when, with his weeping wife and children around him, he looked back upon his past life, lighted up by the gleams of that eternity before him, and lamented what he had been led to do through drink. Oh! the thrilling tones in which these terrible self-accusations were uttered. Here he was—had hardly reached the prime of life; had lost opportunities, had squandered money, had ruined his health, had sacrificed his reputation, for what?—drink. This was not all. Where was his wife? where was his family? what had he not done to her or them? And what was to become of them now? where were they to turn for support? to whom were they to look for protection? should it ever be said that John Birkett's wife and family had become paupers? Oh! distracting thought.

As long as reason remained such were the thoughts to which John Birkett gave utterance; and in ten days from the time that Harry took him home he had passed from amongst men; thus adding another victim to that monster vice which has ravaged the land, which has caused the widow's tears to flow, and the orphan's cries to abound. That vice which is still cherished in high places, and which thousands of ministers of religion, by their practices, encourage and promote.

CHAPTER XXI.

SYMPATHY.

“ Who fails to grieve when just occasion calls,
Or grieves too much, deserves not to be blest,
Inhuman or effeminate his heart.”

SYMPATHY! What does it consist of? This has formed the subject for warm discussions amongst philosophers and critics. It has been argued that what is generally termed sympathy is nothing more or less than a feeling of delight which we experience whilst contemplating the pain or misfortunes of others. Yes, say they, if no feelings of pleasure arise or are awakened by scenes of distress or woe, all such would be shunned; instead of that, men are known to spend their days and means in searching them out. It is not contended that the pleasure is without alloy. No! Great as the philosophers are, they do sometimes bear in mind that they are still on the earth, hence the qualification is introduced. In all ages there have been those who love to look

upon their fellow mortals and contemplate the surging tide of human feelings and affections, but they must stand upon an eminence to do it. They are disinclined to mix with the crowd, yet they pretend to know all about the crushing the crowd has to endure. They see dense masses heaving and swaying to and fro, and will enter into very learned and subtle disquisitions to show from whence the motive power is obtained. They will concoct schemes, invent theories, spin geometric spider-like webs, all having reference to the fabric social; they will dignify their labour by the name of science, men will applaud, and the nation is to be regenerated by the machinery of an association. These are the men who can tell what sympathy is. Are they not continually talking about it? The pleasure they take in their "self-denying labour," they will tell you proceeds from feelings of sympathy; and surely they ought to know.

But apart from philosophy or science, and to come down to the wholesome level of common life in the homes of the English poor, what rich gushing rills of purest sympathy flow through them. Those who have not mixed with the working population, and mixed with them in such a character as to be "one of themselves," know nothing of the nature of these cheering rivulets, or where they take their rise.

The people themselves would be as sorely puzzled as the philosophers if they were asked to "account for" the manifestations of this feeling, as seen in circumstances most unfavourable to its cultivation. But little as poor people know of where it springs from, or how it is called forth, how intensely thousands feel what it is, and how the heart, ready to sink with the weight of sorrow and suffering, is lifted up, yes, leaps for joy, by a trivial act, a cheering word, a glance—aye, and even the glistening tear in the eye of a friend or neighbour. Beautifully expressed and forcibly true are the words of that grand old "Book of Books," which vain philosophy would have men despise :—

"A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season how good is it !"

"The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart, and a good report maketh the bones fat."

Harry Birkett's love of reading, fostered as it had been by the judicious advice of Mark Gibson, and furnished with abundance to feed upon as he grew up, often led him to think upon terms the names of which philosophers had squabbled about. The term "sympathy" was one of these. It was not in the nature of Harry to soar very high, and if he were thinking of any human feeling or affection, he never thought of going very far from home to seek for an

illustration of what it was, or in what circumstances such feeling or affection might be seen to the best advantage. By this, which would likely be designated "a humdrum method of inquiry," Harry was not long in discovering that philosophy, called by ever so big a name, was often at variance with fact. He never felt at liberty to say that philosophy was wrong. He did not know that it was, at least he did not know how he might set about proving it to be so; still he felt that fact was right. The circumstances in which he was now placed by the death of his father gave him ample opportunity of knowing that the poor could sympathise with the poor, whilst those persons who were continually "entering into the philosophy of the matter," either never got in, or if they did, they never came out to show what was the result of their inquiries.

No sooner was the death of John Birkett known than neighbours on all sides manifested their sympathy towards the poor widow. Most of them had little of this world's goods to spare, yet hands and hearts were open freely to give all that they could. Was it feelings of pleasure which led one after another to call, and in the kindest manner offer to discharge the various painful duties which devolve upon a household when death hath stricken down its head? Could those poor women experience

ought of delight who sat consoling with Mrs. Birkett, weeping with her as she wept? The awful stillness that reigned throughout the house, which caused the children to tremble at the approach of death and forget their play, was there anything joyful in that? Oh! how cold after all is the teaching of philosophy. Harry thought and felt this as he looked upon his mother, premature age tinging her features and bending her form, whilst the tenderness of her heart found expression in tears, and her hope and strong consolation found utterance in outpourings of prayer and praise. In her sorrow, deep and poignant as it was, she had much of hope. Her son was still spared to her; she would lean upon him and look to him for earthly comfort. When she asked him that sorrowful night to read a portion of the Sacred Word her eyes told what she thought concerning him. Her hopes, yes, her fears, too, were clearly indicated, and Harry inwardly shrank from the great responsibility which he was given to feel would very soon rest upon him.

Mark Gibson on being made acquainted with Mrs. Birkett's position lost no time in writing to her friends. He knew from what he had seen of her in former years that she would be no party to this. Her friends or relatives had, as she thought, done

enough ; she had well nigh worn them out. Latterly they had treated her in true worldly fashion, and knowing that she had nothing to give, but might in all probability require assistance, they had ceased to correspond with her. She was a long way off, her poverty would not be likely to disgrace them, and what they looked upon as her pride might be left to do what it could for her. Gibson knew the people he had to do with, and although not asking them to assist Mrs. Birkett in any way, he with great tact managed to show them that duty had, in many ways, to control individual likes or dislikes, and that opportunities of doing good neglected, were in most cases blessings despised. He succeeded far beyond his expectations. But for a long time all these doings were concealed in his warm and generous heart. He saw the last sad offices performed for John Birkett, and when he led the widow home, and looked upon the children sitting by the deserted chair, what he felt was expressed in his quiet way to Harry.

“ We will have to set our wits to work, boy. Just call round at my place as you leave work on Tuesday next. I have something to say to you.”

Mrs. Birkett, during many conversations which she had with Mark about this time, had mentioned to him the tendency she feared was springing up in her son's mind to give way to “ sceptical thoughts.”

She, had too, mentioned the companionship which Harry had formed, and her fears as to what this might lead. Mark was therefore armed at all points to receive Harry. Since Mr. Gibson (as Harry had been taught to call him) had become a master, there was to all appearance less warmth about him. So Harry thought. To call and see him now was not at all like calling to see the Mark Gibson of Hazel; Mark who taught him to play draughts and buy in groceries. He lived in a large house. The door was opened by a servant. Mr. Gibson was engaged, but would not be long so.

“Will you please walk in and take a seat,” said the girl. Harry very clumsily entered, and removing his cap, stood by the marble top of the hall table. He felt very uncomfortable, and could not tell why. This was not the sort of reception he expected. Surely my mother would not like me to be looked upon as a beggar, said he to himself. There was nothing said or done which ought to have suggested such a thought. Certainly not. The servant did not know him: she merely treated him as she would have very properly treated any other stranger. The circumstances to Harry were novel. He looked on his own soiled clothes, and contrasted them with what he saw around. He looked on this hall and its fittings and thought of

his mother's little house and clean fireside. He felt he was not at home; and beyond this, he, like many other people in his circumstances, had anticipated something which he was in no wise justified to expect. Therefore because unreasonable expectations, founded on irrational views of life, were not entirely fulfilled, prejudice was bubbling up within. Notions of class distinctions flitted before him. He did not think Mark Gibson need be such "a great swell," and he must not think of showing off to me, growled Harry to himself; and all this evil spirit rising for what?

Had Harry been interrogated then and there, he would have been no more able to reply than thousands are every day who spend their time in grieving over imaginary slights, sinking their own manhood, whilst they snarl on the right hand and on the left, and cry out that others are crushing them.

In a few minutes the servant came up.

"Has Mr. Gibson seen you yet?" she asked.

"No," was the reply very curtly given; "perhaps I had better not wait." Harry would, at the dictation of the feelings he found rising within, have fain made his escape.

"Oh, no, don't go," said the girl, "I'll tell Mr. Gibson that he is wanted."

She tapped at the door, and Harry heard his old tutor's voice, in its kindest tones; "Come in, Agnes."

Mark came out immediately.

"Well, Harry, my boy, and how are you?" This was said with such hearty good will in voice and manner that Harry felt his foolish thoughts give way, and was vexed at himself for entertaining such sentiments respecting the man who had done so much for him.

"I've a visitor, Harry, with me now," said Mark, "a man you will be glad to see; yes, a visitor who will cheer your good mother's heart, as much as his visit has surprised and pleased me. But you have just come up from the shop, have you?—and have not been home; you will want your tea."

Harry replied that he had just left work, but his mother would have his tea ready for him by the time he got home. He thanked Mr. Gibson, notwithstanding.

Mark saw from the manner in which the reply was given that the lad had something of his mother's natural pride about him, and did not press the matter further.

"Well, well, aye surely, I dare say you'll enjoy your meal better with your mother, no doubt, no doubt; but step in here 'a wee,'" said Mark,

leading the way into the back parlour. "Sit down Harry," and he drew forth a chair, and sat down with him.

"Well, Harry," said Mark, beginning very seriously and looking the while earnestly on the boy, who as earnestly returned the gaze; "our business to-night need not occupy much time; I have been thinking what it will be best for your mother to do in order to keep a house over your heads and you all comfortable; but before I give you my opinion I thought I should like to hear yours. We used to talk our affairs over in a very comfortable way down in Hazel, and although our circumstances are much altered there is no reason why we should not talk just in as comfortable a way still. What plan has your mother and you hit upon?"

Harry sighed heavily, and felt some hesitation in replying; he proceeded, however. "Mother thinks we ought to have a smaller house, and that two of my sisters may be placed at service, then there would only be myself and little Susan at home. We thought that my wages and what mother could earn by washing or cleaning would enable us to live for the next two years, and then I would be out of my apprenticeship, and my mother should work no more." Harry broke down here, and Mark was almost overcome also.

“My mother is not strong,” continued Harry; “but her spirits are good, and she will adopt any plan that you would recommend. We would like to do for ourselves without any assistance, and if we can get places for my sisters, I think there is no fear of our being quite happy.”

“Very good, very good indeed, my boy. I fully agree with your resolve, except in one matter. Your mother must not be permitted to go out or take in washing; this will have to be given up; all thoughts of such work for her will have to be cast overboard. To have you out of your time and in a fair way to do for yourself I know is your mother’s great desire; she will live for that. Yes, Harry,” and Mark laid his hand on the boy’s shoulder, “she would even die to accomplish that for you. Your welfare is, I well know, bound up now with your mother’s life, and whatever you do take care you in no way throw a shadow across the path in which she wishes you to move. I am really glad to hear you say that you look forward to the time when you will be a man, and your mother shall be cherished by you; if that resolve be sincerely made, firmly acted upon, and carried out, if you honour such a mother, Harry, as you ought, your days will, indeed, be very long in the land, and the fruit of your labour will be thrice blessed, surely, surely. May

God help you, my dear boy, to do what you say ; and He will, surely, surely."

Mark arose. He moved about the room ; Harry had never seen him so much affected under any circumstances, and he never heard the peculiar burr of the Scottish dialect sound so forcibly or so sweet as in the repetition of that "surely, surely."

"I am forgetting myself," said Mark hastily. "We will see each other again, I'll not trouble you to come round here, but will come on to your mother's. Oh ! What am I talking about ? I will have to come on to-night. I told you I had a visitor. Yes, to be sure. You just now get away home, and tell mother that I will come on to see her in an hour from this, and bring an old friend of her's with me. Good-bye for the present," and he saw Harry out.

Gibson's letter to Mrs. Birkett's relatives had led to the melancholy news being forwarded to Poebeck. No sooner did it reach the ears of "Roper the Ranter" than action was taken by him. He had now withdrawn from his usual daily labour. His son had returned from sea, had been promoted in his profession, was in circumstances to support his father in his declining years, and gladly availed himself of the opportunity of doing this. To use the words of Roper himself, he was now, therefore,

“fully devoted to the service of the One Great Master, whose will must be done if sinners are to escape damnation.” The old man, day by day, “as strength was given,” in the courts and closes of Poebeck “went about doing good.” His sincerity and disinterestedness were as instructive as his quaint speeches and strange manners were suggestive or amusing. Whatever had been got together by the relatives of Mrs. Birkett, and for her use, was entrusted to the care of Roper. He resolved to set sail for Riverside immediately. He would “see for his-sell” what would be best to do, and he would have “once more the opportunity of taking the right hand of fellowship with that faithful lass Jane Birkett, and kneeling at the throne of grace with a soul as clings so close to the cross.”

This earnest and plain-spoken old man was now Gibson’s visitor. When Mark returned to the room after parting with Harry, Roper was “rejoicing,” as he said, and burst out, “Bless the Lord for ever and ever, Mr. Gibson, he is good, vara.”

“I’ve been banqueting here, on angelical cheer
And the joys that eternally last.”

What a comfort to think that God is no respecter of time or place! In old-fashioned smutty Poebeck and in grand Riverside he is the same, and fails not.

"My God I am thine ! what a comfort divine,
What a blessing to know that my Jesus is mine."

Such was the hearty, enthusiastic religion of the man, in his case, every way worthy of being called also "muscular Christianity."

CHAPTER XXII.

A STRUGGLE WITH SELF.

“Young men are as apt to think themselves wise enough as drunken men are to think themselves sober enough. They look upon spirit to be a much better thing than experience.”

HARRY was not long in reaching home. His feelings had undergone a strain whilst conversing with Mr. Gibson, and when he left the house he breathed more freely, yet felt somewhat of self-accusation when reflecting on the rebellious spirit which had arisen as he stood waiting to speak with his old faithful friend and counsellor. Mingled feelings of joy and sorrow moved him. He felt more firmly resolved “to go forth and meet the shadowy future,” yet was sorely puzzled to know how best he might “wisely improve the present.” He was not without fear, and had but a boyish heart. He had, too, a glimpse of the difficulties which beset him, and was just now more inclined to look *at* them, than to grapple *with* them. He looked at things beyond him rather than on those close at hand. He wondered what he should do when he had reached to such a point, and whilst so

wondering perhaps lost his opportunity for present action. He had forgotten the old Ranter's advice, that "The only time a man has for work is *now*—and you should always take *to-day*, even if it is stark naked, rather than be led to dance away after a will-o'-the-wisp of *to-morrow*, which you never may catch."

The pale face of his mother, lighted up as it was by a smile of affectionate welcome, had not to-night that cheering influence upon Harry which once he felt it had. The house looked very lonely. It was clean, the table was spread for him, his books were placed within easy reach, his little sister prattled to him whilst mother made tea, yet there were serious thoughts suggested by all he gazed upon. He had again and again returned from his labour and found his father absent, but *then* there was the hope of father's return. That hope had now fled. True, his recent meetings with his father had been of a painful character; many of them serving but to show the mournful failings and features of his father's life. Death, stern, relentless as it is often called, had, however, in mercy, blotted these out of the son's remembrance for the present, and whilst an affectionate mother hung upon every word which fell from his lips, Harry thought of his father and recalled scenes of domestic happiness, in

which John Birkett was the principal figure, and the chief actor. Natural affection would and did "well up," and the father's errors were overlooked or forgotten by feelings of regret for the father's removal. All the weary nights he had sat listening to every footfall and longing to hear that which he knew so well—all the fatiguing trudges he had undergone late or early—all the degrading orgies he had been compelled to witness—all the foul abuse which had been heaped upon him by his father's wretched companions—all the misery inflicted upon him at home by reason of his father's conduct—yet all these were forgotten for the time, and Harry could think of his father as happy, hearty, home-loving: what he once was, what, too, he might have been, but for—Ah! there the boy was checked.

Mrs. Birkett could not fail to notice how her son was agitated. It was useless for Harry to try and conceal his feelings from her. Yet he did, and sometimes vainly thought that he could. Every line of her son's features had been read by her, and pondered on too frequently and anxiously to be now misinterpreted, and she could see at a glance that the interview with Mr. Gibson had not, whatever else it might have done, shed unclouded sunshine on Harry's heart. Feeling this, she was not disposed to press him into conversation on the sub-

ject, but rather trusted to her own power of allaying his agitation, and then leading him gently on. Mrs. Birkett had been during the day occupied in trying to obtain a situation for one of her daughters, and this gave her a favourable opportunity to turn the current of Harry's thoughts in the direction which she wished.

"Well, Harry," said she, "what do you think of losing Sarah? I have been inquiring respecting a place for her, and it is more than probable that she will go."

"Indeed!" said Harry, somewhat surprised, and aroused from the reverie into which he had fallen over his tea; "now that you mention that, mother, it reminds me Mark Gibson will be down here just now, and he told me to tell you that he would bring an old friend with him, one whom you would be very glad to see."

"Oh! you called at Mr. Gibson's? What a strange thing, Harry, that you did not mention this before. An old friend! whoever can it be?"

Harry felt the full force of his mother's reproof by the tone of voice in which she spoke, and meeting her eye as he replied, saw that she had made his silence speak to her.

"Mr. Gibson requested me, as you know, to call to-night, and I did so; but I don't know how it is,

or why, mother, but I don't feel so comfortable in Mr. Gibson's house as I used to do. He was kind enough, too, and appeared glad to see me; but we have different clothes on to what we used to have when we worked together, and what I could take from him once with good will I really cannot now. I feel that he is much above me, and I don't care to be looked down upon. I felt much inclined——”

His mother saw the self-will bubbling up, and raising her hands checked it by exclaiming—

“Is that my dear boy speaking? Why, Harry, has all your reading and all my talking been thrown away on you? Can you not yet distinguish between what a man says or does, and what you think he says or does? Because you think that Mr. Gibson is much above you in worldly circumstances you are led to think further that he must, from necessity, look down upon you. Foolish, foolish boy! that is pride of heart, Harry. You must really strive to keep that down. The same spirit which leads you to feel so towards Mr. Gibson would, if you were in his circumstances, lead you to act towards your fellows as you only imagine he now acts towards you. No one would regret more than Mr. Gibson to find you encouraging such thoughts. Kind, generous Mark! Do not, Harry, wound me by entertaining for one moment what I assure you

is a wicked thought. You know, or have heard, a deal in this house about proverbs, and this is an illustration of 'measuring a peck out of your own bushel.' I never yet saw any persons who felt themselves as 'looked down upon' when they were doing what was right but they were soon led to do themselves wrong, and eventually were found, and deservedly so, in that position in which they only fancied others wished them to be. We must act honestly to ourselves if we expect to be honestly or honourably dealt by. The devil is too ready to take advantage of 'fancied slights,' making us think that we are great people. This was the form assumed by him in the first temptation. It is a very old trick—so old that I wonder to see you ensnared by it."

"But, mother," interposed Harry, "I would like to be under no obligation to any one. I feel we are under deep obligations to Mr. Gibson, and I don't want to increase them. I would rather pay off what we owe, and try and get no more into debt of that sort."

"Ah, Harry! vain aspirations in a world of woe—a world in which no one of us can live for him or herself," replied Mrs. Birkett, drawing a deep sigh, and casting a glance of imploring tenderness at her son. "You have, my dear boy, been living for the last few years in books. You took refuge in them,

I dare say, partly from inclination and partly from a desire to forget many painful trials you had to undergo. You have, I rejoice to think, by that means escaped many temptations of the world ; but you are nevertheless exposed to others not less dangerous, because not so easily seen—more subtle, yet to youth more inviting. If we are to fulfil the object of our life, we must in many ways and for many things be under obligations to others ; and others will, even in our humble way, be under obligations to us. I don't mean that we should, as you appear to have done, feel the chain of these obligations galling us, but we must do kindness where we can, and receive kindness as we can or as we deserve ; and whether we give or receive, we must forget all of self. You and I contract what you call 'debts' or obligations every day we live. We will cease to live when we cease to do that."

"Stay, stay, mother," said Harry, "don't think me worse than I am. Perhaps I do not make myself understood. I admit that I feel nettled—that I may not look on the world or the people in it as your years have taught you to do ; but what I want to aim at is just this,—that by some plan or other (and it vexes me to think I cannot form one) we might be able to keep a house over our heads for the next two years, until I am free from my

apprenticeship, without the assistance of any one. I don't care how poor I live, what privations I submit to; but I cannot bear the thought of you and the children being indebted to any one for support; and from what Mr. Gibson hinted at, something of that sort is intended by him. I know he has been kind, I will never forget his kindness; but now when I can keep myself and help to keep you I don't want to receive anything, and would rather think of some method of making a small return for all that he has done. Will you now, mother, promise me to stick to the plan we talked over, and not allow Mr. Gibson to persuade you to give it up?"

"Much as I admire your resolution, Harry," said his mother, "and gladly as I will do anything to keep up what I have ever strove to do—self-respect, yet so confident am I that Mark Gibson would not advise any course which would weaken this feeling, and so sure am I that he would shrink from the responsibility of urging us to do anything against our own inclination, that I would hesitate before pledging myself to any plan. Let us hear Mark, and let me hear you speak as plainly to Mark as you have done to me. You will never hurt his feelings by a display of candour. He will be delighted, I know he will. Independence, in

the sense you now speak of it, will be just what Mark Gibson would glory in; but, good as independence is, let us have it on a right foundation. I have seen people act, as they thought, in an independent manner, and their independence was nothing more nor less than a mixture of indifference to the feeling of others, combined with ignorance of their duties as members of the human family, and a good dash of nonsensical pride and unbearable insolence thrown in to help it out."

Harry felt this strong rebuke of his mother, and it was rendered no less pungent from the fact that it was fully deserved. Mentally he was biting his lips with vexation. It is nothing unusual to find men of mature years in a similar state of mind to that in which Harry was now. They have, as they think, hit upon some excellent plan for achieving a desired object. They have not examined it in all its details, nor seen or tried to see how their plan will depend or infringe upon the feelings and dispositions of other minds. No! Men who "just hit upon" things never trouble themselves with much inquiry. They are Sir Oracles, their views must be met by others in the same light as they themselves "hit upon" them. If not, the spirit is up. They enter themselves without delay in the "noble army of martyrs," and soured in temper,

and disgusted with the ingratitude of friends and the public, they spend much time in snarling at the efforts of other men whose talents and zeal they cannot appreciate, and whose success they will not understand. If they rest on the roll of martyrology, or are content with "a jolly good snarl," as they call it, now and then, there is little to regret; but instances are before the world now of men who have begun by snarling and have ended by throwing dirt! And a good deal they throw, too. Yet are they nowise ashamed of their occupation, but find some to applaud and others to assist them.

Mrs. Birkett would not, in all probability, have spoken so strongly to her son, but she had painfully experienced, in many cases, the evil effects which spring from people without due consideration and without *due sense* seeking to have their own way, and, finding they cannot obtain this, becoming dissatisfied with all around. Harry's shopmates had done much to puff the boy up. They talked a good deal about Radicalism, about freedom of opinion, of their hatred to serfdom, and of their glorious birth-right as Englishmen, all of which being couched in the language of popular orators was well calculated to inflame youth. "He that would be free, himself must strike the blow." How often Harry had

listened to this? So often, that now he was in that frame of mind as recklessly to act upon the sentiment, and by the foulest ingratitude, guised under the term independence, sever, so far as he was concerned, the friendship of Mark Gibson. Yet Mr. Gibson had never opposed him in any way, but for his good, as it had proved. "No, but he may oppose me, and as long as he comes backwards and forwards he is sure to have some influence on my mother, and he may put the curb on." If Harry would have spoken out all he felt his sentiments would have been of that character.

The conversation between Harry and his mother was interrupted by a sharp knock at the door. Mrs. Birkett, on opening it, was greatly surprised to meet the stern face of her old friend Roper, from Poebeck. "Well, well, this is an old friend, indeed; come in, and welcome." She held forth her hand, which was soon grasped by the great brawny hand of the old Ranter.

"Peace be to this house," said he, "Well, Jane, thank God for all his goodness, for good He is to thee still, my lass."

"I thought to surprise as well as please you," said Mark Gibson, who accompanied Roper, and who now greeted Mrs. Birkett very kindly. "I did na' care to tell Harry who was coming."

Mark chuckled very heartily at the old Ranter's saluting the children, pouring out the while earnest prayers for their welfare, temporal as well as spiritual. Harry rose to welcome Mr. Roper, and his face indicated that the old man's sunshine was already chasing away the gloom which had hung around the boy's mind during tea.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE OLD APOSTLE, AND THE NEW FAITH.

“I venerate the man whose heart is warm,
Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life
Coincident, exhibit lucid proof
That he is honest in the sacred cause.”

THE visit of the old Ranter to Mrs. Birkett was seasonable, and proved as pleasant on the one hand as it had been unexpected on the other. “It is so like you, Richard, coming to find me out and talk with me at such a time as this,” said Mrs. Birkett, and her face was radiant with that peculiar smile which the recollections of happy days of old and the familiar features of a kind old friend were calculated to awaken.

No higher testimony need be borne to the character of the old Ranter than is to be found in the simple words of Mrs. Birkett. To visit the widow and the fatherless was “so like him.” And no one

could look on the old man, or listen to his earnest conversation, without being convinced that he was happy in his work—that he loved it for its own sake; and that whilst in his rude and very humble way he proved a blessing to others, he was abundantly blessed himself. He never concealed this. “Don’t you run away with the notion,” he has been often heard to say, “that I get nowt for my labour! You may not see what I get; indeed, neither the world nor the devil can see it; but while I am in humble faith watering others, I get watered myself.”

It called forth strange feelings in the mind of Harry Birkett to see the affectionate warmth which the old man exhibited towards those around him. To hear, too, from his lips many passages of sacred Scripture with which his mother’s readings had made him familiar, and find these quoted so correctly, applied so forcibly, and dwelt upon with such downright seriousness and power, surprised Harry, and well might have humbled him. When the conversation turned on the circumstances of friends at Poebeck, and what efforts the Primitive Brethren were making to battle with that greatest foe to human happiness—strong drink—not only was Harry surprised, but Mark Gibson, shrewd and cautious, yet warm-hearted and wise Mark was

interested beyond measure with the good sense and well-chosen observations of "the old man eloquent." There had been great doings in Poebeck. The work begun at Preston had spread rapidly. Old Roper had in Mrs. Birkett, her son and Mark Gibson, attentive listeners, whilst he described the effects of what he termed "the new faith to fasten on to, and support and defend, the old religion."

Little did that small band of brothers, who, on the platform at Preston, twenty-six years ago, surrounded that reformed drunkard "Dick Turner," think of the celebrity, nay, renown, which would attach itself to their sayings or doings on that night. Least of all, perhaps, did "Dick Turner" himself think of the spirit which would be evoked, the feelings which would be awakened, by his simply giving, in true Lancashire fashion, emphatic expression to his determination totally to abstain from all intoxicating drinks. Yes, abstain he would, and that teetotally! Happy expression! All honour be to zealous "Dick Turner" for it. "Teetotaler" a term of reproach, indeed; away with the thought! Consider rather how much the Temperance cause is indebted to "Dick Turner" for his extremely appropriate and expressive term. Suppose it did; yes, or suppose it does, excite mirth in the minds of some. It did and does excite much more than

mirth in the minds of many. In its suggestiveness it is wonderful; it is prospective as well as retrospective. Vain, indeed, would be the effort to paint the scenes which this simple word calls forth—the homes made happy, the hearts made glad. And if it did nothing more, it still does this. It serves to call public attention to the fact, that there exists in this great and glorious Old England of ours a brotherhood of devoted men, who fight under the banner and battle for the principles now understood to be expressed in the term teetotalism—that is total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks. Thank God the ranks of this brotherhood are being swelled day by day; and although terms of reproach are freely cast upon the leaders by the doers of spiritual wickedness in high places, and sneers are spitefully spouted out by interested sinners whose craft is in danger, notwithstanding concealed foes within and open enemies without, still bravely is the banner borne up and on, and mighty are the moral triumphs won by teetotalism! It is making no way, some tell us, and would fain have others believe it. Look, then, at “Dick Turner” on the Preston platform in 1833, and at Gough at Exeter-hall in 1859. Look at the reception of J. Silk Buckingham’s motion in the House of Commons in 1834, and read Lord Brougham’s speech at

Bradford in 1859! Seeing the enemies, subtle, malignant, worldly-wise and powerful, which teetotalism has to contend against, this is progress unmistakable—progress worthy to be proud of.

This, then, was the new faith which the old Ranter “had fastened on to the old religion.” It was the interest, the warmth, the heartiness which he displayed whilst entering into the details relative to the promulgation of this new faith, which had so riveted the attention of his auditors. Teetotalism had from Preston soon reached Poebeck, and the name of Richard Roper was to be found amongst the first list of pledged abstainers in that town. The old man had, in his way, battled with drink and its doings for years. In the church with which he was connected, in the households which his warm heart and generous nature led him to visit, amongst his fellow-workmen, everywhere, to use his own expression, “he had seen the slimy trail of the old serpent’s best friend—drunkenness.” To the zeal and enthusiasm of the young disciple was added, in Roper’s case, the wariness and wisdom of a man of the world, who had lived long, and not altogether in vain. His knowledge of men gave him a considerable insight into human character, his knowledge of the Bible gave him the power of making all other knowledge useful. He

was firm and unbending in the expression of his views; would have "no truck with people who only go half way." He had always, in every sense, so he said, "found the half-way house to be the devil's house of call," so he never stopped there. He had made himself sure that he was on the right way. He did this, he would say, before he started; so that once the journey was begun he never looked back. He would not lose that much time, for there were many poor pilgrims on the road who wanted cheering, and some of them, not being so sure-footed as he was, slipped into dykes. Well! what with trying to cheer one and help another, he found himself fully employed, and he worked on, feeling well assured that the Master waited for him at the far end with a kind welcome and a full reward.

The old man was quite enthusiastic when speaking of the labours of his brethren, the teetotalers of Poebeck. Mark Gibson had not seen much of Roper before. He had heard of him from Mrs. Birkett, and when he had met him, which he did on a few occasions, he was impressed as much with his eccentricity of speech as anything. But after listening to the details which the old Ranter gave relative to the progress of total abstinence at Poebeck, Mark Gibson no longer doubted the zeal,

devotedness, and disinterestedness of Roper. No one could listen to the man for half-an-hour and not be convinced of the great goodness which prompted all his actions. True, exception might have been taken by fastidious persons to his manner, to his mode of expression; but Gibson, although a highly intelligent man, could, nevertheless, admire and rightly appreciate sincerity, even although it were homespun. Nay, he would rather rely upon it than upon that wonderfully woven imitation which was being then and is still so much used.

Harry listened, too, with more than usual interest, to the old man. This was the first teetotal preacher he had ever heard. There were advocates of abstinence at Riverside, but he had never gone to hear them, and if he ever thought of doing so the thought next in succession would be, "What is the use of your wasting time, you will never need to be convinced of the evils of indulgence in strong drinks. You see before you every day enough to convince you of the sin and folly, and to deter you from ever giving way to the degrading vice." Yes, Harry, like thousands more, saw and felt all this; yet the discourse of old Roper, in its plainness and simplicity, had caused Harry to doubt whether or not he even were safe. The burning words of the old man had been brought home to him. He

might have attended a dozen Temperance or total abstinence lectures and they would not have had upon him the influence which now he felt. Here was his mother's oldest friend, a man who knew and often lamented over his father's errors and sin. A man who, strange to say, had to-night, in the course of his narrative, showed him more of his own heart and the treachery which it manifested, than he ever expected to hear. "There is something good in this new faith, mother," said Harry.

"Something!" cried the Ranter, "something! Why, my lad, there is everything good in it. Who do you think has joined our society in Poebeck? indeed, he is our first man, and calls himself the skipper of our craft. Why, Jem Brill! your old friend Jem is a great favourite on our platform. Oh, yes, little Nelly, as Jem calls his wife, is a regular attender at our chapel, and she has wonderful stories to tell of Jem's success in 'teetotal preaching.' Why I mention this now is, I am reminded of Jem Brill when you say there is some good in teetotalism. Jem was talking one night, and he said, 'When you young men go to church to be married, as I hope you all will, you will have to say that you take the woman for better or worse; but when you come to be united to the fair damsel of teetotalism, you need never fear about any worse,

it's all better than good, and if you stick to her you'll never be able to coil the rope any other way.' Nelly never tires of telling the story, and she is prouder than ever of her old man. Yes, yes; we have many a good laugh at Jem; but his heart, he says, is straight if his eyes are crooked, and I do believe that; oh, yes, a right good man, with a cheerful hearty wife, is Brill."

This was delightful news to Mrs. Birkett. Oh! how well she could picture to herself "Nelly" tossing Jem's hair off, and straightening his collar, before he went out to the teetotal meeting! How she could fancy that busy little woman buzzing about from house to house, leaving here a tract, there a word of reproof, here a word of consolation, kissing and fondling little children, giving sweeties to some, and promising them to others if they were good. Reading assiduously as she did, and "cramming her dear old curlywig's noddle," as she used to talk about; and Harry, too, how pleased he was to hear of old Jem. What a number of questions he had to ask about one or other of his old schoolfellows or playmates. Mother and son were living, and living very pleasantly in the past, when Mark Gibson thought it a very favourable opportunity to break in by opening up the more immediate object of their visit.

Mark did it very cautiously and with great discretion. Mrs. Birkett's friends had behaved more liberally than he had been prepared to expect. There would be no difficulty whatever, so thought Mark, of Mrs. Birkett's daughters obtaining situations; then with what Mark had in hand, and relying on what was promised, Mrs. Birkett with her son Harry might struggle on as they both wished to do until Harry could keep himself.

Mark laid great stress on the last words, yet he smiled at Harry with the old kind smile: therefore the lad did not feel aught of bitterness in the emphasis.

Matters were all conversed on very comfortably, for the old Ranter had infused a new spirit throughout the house. Mark did not tell Mrs. Birkett all that the old Ranter had done, or what he had passed through for her sake. He had no occasion to do this. He saw that Mrs. Birkett knew all, from her knowledge of Roper's character, and that she felt more than she could possibly express. Besides, he had seen enough of the old man's disposition during their conversation this evening to show him that Roper did not kindness to be seen of men. The tearful eyes of the widow showed the thankfulness of her heart, and the old Ranter met her attempt to reply by the remark—

“ Well, Jane Birkett, if thou's going to thank any one, let's go down on our knees. That's the best position for any one to be in if they are thankful. Indeed, it's the safest at any time. Come, then—

‘ The devil trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.’

Do'st thou know that, Harry, my lad? Thou is not Jane Birkett's son if thou doesn't.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

SELF-CULTURE.

“ Poor men’s children, they and they alone,
By their condition taught, can understand
The wisdom of the prayer that daily asks
For daily bread.”

OLD Mr. Roper’s visit and the conversations consequent upon it exercised a marked effect upon Mrs. Birkett and her son, and had resulted in every way favourable to the views of both. The opportunity would now be afforded to them for practising that self-denial and exhibiting that self-reliance which they aimed at, albeit they aimed in different ways. The frugality and household management of the mother, the energy and perseverance of the son, were now about to be put to the test; and, great as the strain might prove, both seemed nerved for the task, and equal to bear it. Mrs. Birkett’s elasticity of spirits, such as she had been a stranger to for years, returned. Her strength seemed indeed to have been renewed; and Harry, cheered and encouraged by the example and wise precepts of his mother, prepared to contend resolutely with the

difficulties of his position, and resist sternly the multifarious temptations to which youth, in a town like Riverside, stood more especially exposed. The resolve was fully made ; the cost had been carefully, yes, conscientiously counted, and action was now about to supersede thought.

Harry's two sisters, through the good offices of friends, were soon "got off to service," and the brother carrying a little box or bundle made up by a faithful mother's love was a touching incident to them at the outset of their lives. They wept sorely to leave their home, poor as it was, and cheerless as it had often been. Harry never forgot their faltering steps as they approached "their first place." He for a long time afterwards felt the throbs of affection as he remembered the trembling little hands which he shook, and the tearful eyes which met his when he parted with his sisters, and knew that they had really left home. "They have lost their father and are now torn from their mother," thought Harry ; but the bustling crowds in the streets, the glaring shops, the life of the town in which he speedily found himself, caused the poetry to flee away, and he could then look steadily at the other side of the picture. Changes were in store for him. His mother, his baby sister, and himself, went to live in a small cottage outside of the town. It was

a long walk for him night and morning, but this he delighted in, for several reasons. By this means he was compelled to take exercise in the open and fresh air, which would otherwise have been denied him; and he secured, also, what to him just now was of great importance, better health and cheaper house-rent. His walks by stile-roads and across the fields kept up his familiarity with many objects in nature to which he had become attached, and his observations on the changes of the seasons were guided by his mother to strengthen his faith in that allwise and almighty Power which sceptical shop-mates would fain have had him despise or lightly esteem. Nor was this all. When he reached home in the evening, there was around him no temptation to draw him from what he had now begun to look upon as his own fireside. All popular amusements or recreations, (?) rational or otherwise, were in town, and this was more than three miles off. After his day's toil was done, and he had enjoyed six miles of walking, Harry found his home to be indeed sweet. The old books which his small means had enabled him to pick up at the stalls furnished occupation for his leisure. The "Penny" and "Saturday Magazines," which he purchased weekly with his pocket-money, were looked upon as a great storehouse of learning; and the illustrations were

to his mother and little sister unexampled wonders of pictorial and, it might be said, "high art."

Harry had not lived years in Riverside and failed to notice, what Mr. Gibson had many times alluded to, the opportunities which were afforded to young men for self-improvement, and consequent advancement in life. He noticed one after another "rising from the ranks," obtaining promotion, or by their conduct securing or claiming it. He saw, too, that in most instances, the foundation of future success was laid by the habits formed in youth, and he felt now that the manner in which he spent the next two years of his life, the way in which he employed his leisure, would decide his future position. With these views and feelings stimulating him he became more resolutely determined to master the difficulties which beset him by reason of his imperfect early education. Some friends of Mrs. Birkett's, officers in the church, sometimes called upon her; with these Harry would converse, expecting to obtain at least encouragement, if not direction. No! the boy, so they said, talked of earthly things—was on very dangerous ground. The head might be cultivated at the expense of the heart, and if intellectual pride once set in, there was an end of all spirituality. Harry saw there was no hope of help from that quarter, and the im-

pression made upon his mind by what his mother termed "the wet blanket" which these exemplary Christians threw upon his efforts could never afterwards be wholly effaced. Men who thought "their Magazine" and "their Instructor" contained all knowledge, human or divine, necessary to be known, were not likely to be held in high esteem by a youth who had obtained a glimpse into "Paley's Theology," and was vigorously working at and trying to comprehend "Butler's Analogy."

Closely as Harry read, and, to his mind, systematically as he arranged his evening work, he failed to make that progress which he had hoped for. When he was thrown into the company of strange workmen in the dinner hour, or if he took a ramble with any, he was often humbled. He met with some young men who had read the same books as himself, but they appeared to have extracted much more from the authors than he had done. He worked hard enough in all conscience; had he obtained the right tools?

Harry had been several weeks in the little suburban cottage when Mark Gibson came out to see them. Mark was greatly delighted to find mother and son in such excellent spirits. Mrs. Birkett was almost joyous. She had got to work as usual, and many of the poor cottagers, her neighbours,

had experienced her kindness at the sick bed. Harry had been set to work in the fields and hedgesides, and the "best salve for burns" was just being compounded by Mrs. Birkett as Mark entered the house. Harry thought Mr. Gibson more friendly than ever, and was encouraged, therefore, to speak freely with him in reference to the course of reading which he had drawn up for himself. He had arranged a subject for each evening; he had now, too, obtained "Pinnock's Guide to Knowledge;" he had a "Catechism of Geography." Oh! he was in great spirits, had formed wonderful plans, was bent on accomplishing intellectual feats without a parallel, to judge by the rapidity with which he ran the list of subjects off the reel.

Mark smiled several times, yet listened attentively until the youth's enthusiasm cooled a little. When Harry had got through his proposed plans for self-education his cautious friend took him up thus,—

"Aye, man, you're going on bravely, and suppose that you just 'get through' all you have told me of, what will you really know after all? There was that man in 'The Pilgrim's Progress' (you know his name well enough), who made a very short cut, as he thought, by getting over the wall, recollect what became of him. You seem bent upon taking

a short cut to the temple of knowledge, but I don't think you'll reach it by that track. Why, man, look at the work you have laid out for yourself; you have taken a large field and you cannot cultivate it all at once. Supposing you had the time, you have not the means. No, neither have you the tools. Don't you remember what that old peat-cutter said to us one Sunday—the old man at the little cottage where yon bonnie wee girly lived that you used often to talk about?"

Harry recollected the cottage very well, indeed he never forgot it; and the mention of what Mark designated "Yon bonnie wee girly," caused a flush to rise on his cheek. He recollected many things that kind old man said, but nothing bearing on what they were now speaking of.

"No, it is just likely not," said Mark; "you were, perhaps, not so careful to catch all that the old man said as you might have been. Your attention was, perhaps, turned another way. But the old man was telling us about a small piece of land which the squire had allowed him to have, in order that he might be enabled to grow potatoes and vegetables, and thus provide better for his family. Well, he told us that by dint of proper cultivation and due attention to the little patch he got more out of it than he might have done had he had a

large field. He was better off—that was his expression—than if he had three times as much ground. And why? Because he had just taken as much as he could work well, and with comfort and profit to himself. Now, Harry, if you were to act as that old friend of yours did—just take a small patch, cultivate that well, work at it diligently, and get out of it all you can—I think you will by such means secure for yourself a much better crop than if you exhaust your energies and greatly over-tax your means by trying to bring the whole field which you have mapped out under cultivation. To begin, now, there is your mother-tongue—what do you know of that? You may suppose, as I did for years, that because you can read with tolerable accuracy, and that your memory is moderately retentive—that because you have got through several books, and can talk about what they contain—therefore you must really know something of English. Now, in our old, Hazel style of talking, let us put this to the test.

Mark took from his pocket Milton's "Paradise Lost," a book which he knew Harry had professed to have read. He read the first sentence, and then asked his old pupil to reduce that to prose, or "dissect the sentence." Harry was completely staggered. "Parts of speech" he had read some-

thing of, but as to the structure or right use of the English language he knew nothing. By such means was Harry soon convinced of his ignorance of English; and moreover, was led from this to see that by reason of his being in this condition he lacked the key which would enable him to unlock the rich treasures of knowledge he longed to reach. How dim, indeed, had the visions of half-an-hour ago become! How dark the path was now which just before he had looked upon lighted up by the fire of his ardent temperament! "Ah!" sighed Harry to himself; "it's of no use. I might as well give up the task. The very entrance to my grand field is beset with difficulties." Then a heavy sigh escaped him, but his eye brightened as he remembered Mark Gibson had told him the British definition of difficulty was "a thing to be overcome."

"Harry's mother, who looked on the while, soon saw that the youthful enthusiasm of her son had received a check. This did not escape Mark, either. Had he not worked to accomplish it.

"Well, Mr. Gibson," said Harry, after a pause, "I feel my ignorance, and *that*, you used to say, was something. What steps can I now take? How would you advise me to proceed?"

This was wrung from Harry. Mrs. Birkett knew what an effort it had cost her son to speak out

thus, especially to Mark Gibson, of whom Harry had spoken harshly. Dearly as she loved her son, and earnestly as she encouraged his efforts to proceed in the path he had marked out for himself, yet she inwardly rejoiced to see what she invariably termed his natural pride of heart and self-sufficiency thoroughly pierced.

Mark considered for some moments before he replied, "You'll no be able, Harry, to get on in the direction you seek to go, unless you place yourself at once in the right path. Do as I did. Yes, I may as well tell you, as I now do—go to school! I have been for years past attending the evening schools of the Mechanics' Institution, picking up crumbs just as I can, trying to draw and figure a little, getting at night what I can make useful to myself in the day. But I have not marked out for myself such a long course as you appear to have done. I am getting to know one or two subjects, and trying to know them well. Now, if you think over what we have been talking of, and feel that you would like to go to school, the payment, which is a guinea a-year, payable in advance, shall be made for you; I'll see to that;" and Mark arose, saying his time had expired, he left Harry and his mother "good-night." He went off rather suddenly, they both thought.

"A guinea a-year, payable in advance, and he will

pay it for me," muttered Harry again and again. "No; I won't go to school on any such conditions. What becomes of Mark's proverb, which he has so often told me, 'Out of debt out of danger?' and now he holds out a noose for me to run my head into. No; I won't do it, mother. I'll save up until I get the guinea. I'll pay for what I get, and I'll pay for it out of my own earnings; then I'll be sure to see that I really do get what I pay for."

"Oh! Harry, Harry," said his mother, "do keep that scornful lip down. Think calmly over what Mr. Gibson has proposed to you."

Harry did think over it week after week; but, convinced as he was of the benefit to be derived from attendance at school, and the systematic instruction given by able teachers, yet he could in nowise bear the thought of Mark Gibson, or indeed anyone else, paying for it. No, that would never do. He called at the school and saw the assistant secretary, and to him expressed his surprise that the sum of twenty-one shillings should be expected from a poor youth or working man in advance. "It is the law," Harry was told; and a very stupid one too, thought he.

"If your master is a subscriber you can get in for half a guinea," replied the secretary. "If not, you are allowed to pay the guinea in four quarterly

instalments, but you must procure a guarantee that the twenty-one shillings will be paid."

"Worse and worse!" thought Harry, as he walked away. "What will my mother say to that? The first step in my father's downward course was his not hating suretyship; and here, although I may be prepared to pay for one quarter's education, I cannot obtain this unless I pay for four, or obtain a bond that the amount for four quarters will be forthcoming."

Harry looked again over the prospectus of the institution which the secretary had given to him, and wondered at rather than admired the sagacity which dictated such a law, and that, too, for the management of an institution the foundation stone of which had been laid by Lord Brougham, and which was said to be "especially designed for the improvement and elevation of the working classes!"

No persuasion on the part of his mother, nor reasoning on his own, could induce him to alter his purpose. Go to the evening schools of that institution he certainly would, and "save up" until he had the guinea in advance he certainly did! And nothing in the course of Harry's chequered life pleased his dear old friend Mark Gibson better than the features of Harry's character which this transaction brought out.

Harry had been practically taught by his mother that "no gain is so certain as that which proceeds from the economical use of what you have." Yet he was a long time before he could accomplish the object on which he had set his heart—"saving a guinea!" Strange indeed were the feelings which took possession of him when he found the feat had been accomplished. Where is the working man who can ever forget, or adequately describe, the glow of heartfelt joy which passed over and through him when he saw in his possession that which he had spent months in striving to secure? A man who had laid by a shilling now, sixpence again, then perhaps there would be a stoppage for a week or two, or through some unexpected pressure the little store would have to be encroached upon. Yet hope kept him up, his honest resolution cheered him on; he saw what other men had done, men even in more humble circumstances than himself, what struggling they had, how hard it had been found to wring pennies from small weekly earnings, convert the copper into silver, and so go on. Yet it had been done, and he, too, would do it! He, too, would be able to say one day, "I owe no man anything, and I have a pound of my own!" And now, behold that day has arrived, and he sees before him—What? A golden sovereign! That golden coin

his own—the reward of his industry, frugality, and thrift. The man places his hands in his pockets, then he buttons them. He stretches himself, and stands more proudly erect. He is a different man from that day forth. He is a capitalist—has indeed a stake in the country. He becomes somewhat conservative in his notions, and no longer wonders why a rich man should think himself somebody. Let any unfortunate currency doctor put to such a man the question, “What is a pound?” Would not the said doctor be stunned by the reply? The man who has gone through such a process to obtain his first pound never can forget it, and the way to obtain the second is made to him very plain.

Mark Gibson was very soon made acquainted with the result of Harry’s “saving up,” and heartily indeed did he congratulate the youth on the accomplishment of his object. He saw clearly enough, and indirectly expressed it, that the effort which Harry had made, the self-denial he had practised, and the success which attended all, would tell visibly upon his character for life. Mark was delighted to hear from Harry’s lips the scheme he had hit upon, the shifts he had made “to make ends meet and have a little piece over;” and Harry was delighted in turn to hear from Mark the results of some of his early struggles. Well did Harry in after years

remember the fire which lighted up his eye as Mark, in speaking of "saving up," alluded thus to what both so dearly loved and fondly remembered.

"When thinking on my first savings, Harry, I am always reminded of mountain climbing. What a great feat the climbing of your first mountain is considered! It may have been comparatively of no great height—nothing to compare to what you have climbed since. However, it was great to you, yet you climbed it; and gazed wondering on the scene below. You reached the summit, and that is more than many tourists do. But it really was hard work, right well you know that. How well you remember, too, every turn you took, and what your feelings were every time you flung yourself down on the rough hill-side to rest. The tortuous path, in some parts worn well in by climbers like yourself, and the rough grey stones around which the ferns clustered, and to which the lichens clung, how well you bear in mind their form and colour. The little rill which trickled from the hoary breast of the cliff, or the shaded streamlet in the ghyll where you quenched your thirst, cooled your brow, and looked up the while at the heights above you. All these rise up in your remembrance years after, and stand out to comfort and console you, to reconcile you to your lot, and fill your mind with hope

and pleasure in anticipation. True, you may have climbed many and greater mountains since, you may have experienced worse weather and shared in more perilous adventures, yet you never forget your first mountain! Oh, no! It may be that by practice the work has become tolerably easy, and what you once considered a trial of strength you now set about for healthy exercise; the difficult feat has become a pleasure."

How forcibly true Harry felt all this to be, and how delightfully Mark brought forth all his northern remembrances.

"As the pedestrian with his first mountain," continued Mark, "so the working man with the saving of his first pound. That is his first hill, and well might it be called 'the hill difficulty.' It is of no mean altitude, either. He remembers all the thorns and briars which beset his path, and one or two false steps which he incautiously took. He is reminded where he might have saved himself labour, and how, by a sharp turn, he might save a distance; and well this experience serves him when he comes to mount the second hill, to save his second pound. Soon all is found to go easy; he gets rid of all superfluous luggage; he does not trouble his head about the style of his dress, but suits his wear to his work, and does not care one jot for the fashion-

able people who surround him. He knows what he has to do, and that if he is to gain the summit on which he has set his mind he must set to work in good time and in good earnest, for it is his own stout heart and active limbs which will secure the elevation. He will find no one in these days ready or waiting to carry him up. No; and if he did, depend upon it, Harry, the elevation attained by such means would add little to the man's health or happiness."

Such were a plain Scotch mason's views on thrifty habits, and such was the teacher at whose feet Harry Birkett once more sat.

CHAPTER XXV.

PRACTICAL TEACHING.

“Thanks, thanks to thee my worthy friend,
For the lesson thou hast taught.”

THE Riverside Mechanics' Institution, at the time Harry Birkett joined it, was a “great educational establishment.” With a humble name, and with very limited means, it had begun in a small room; but, such was the temper of the time, better and enlarged accommodation had to be sought out, and in a few years the friends of education, and in that sense the best friends of the people,—could boast of an institution erected and completed at a cost of not less than £30,000!

The progress of this institution, like progress of many other kinds, was partly the result of antagonism. Men differed as to the best means of promoting the spread of education amongst the operative classes. Their differences caused them to take sides, to form parties, to work zealously for their own side, to subscribe liberally, and thus prove the sincerity of their faith by their works. Their sympathy with the cause took a practical shape; other than this would have been useless.

The founders of the Riverside Mechanics' Institution held the opinion that secular education might be imparted at school, and religious teaching might be given at home. At all events they resolved that no dogmatic theology should be taught within their walls. "No sectarianism!" was the great rallying cry; and as there were many great people who never failed to declare themselves to be also very religious people, who took quite an opposite view, and maintained that "religious instruction," such as they "believed in," ought to form the basis of all secular teaching, no wonder that the fight was a fierce one, and no wonder that the Riverside institution was looked upon as "a great fact" by the non-sectarians.

"The evening department" was only one branch of the great institution, but it was that branch which, above all others, had charms for Harry Birkett. His means or time would not permit of his attending any other. His circumstances were the circumstances of thousands amongst the labouring classes; hence the great value of these evening schools to them. There were upwards of one thousand pupils on the roll of this evening school at this time, but the average attendance did not exceed five hundred. This might be "accounted for" thus:—Every subscriber of one guinea annually

had the privilege of sending all his apprentices or sons to the evening school at a fee of five shillings per year. A great many boys were paid for who never attended. They lightly esteemed that which cost them nothing. The youths or men who attended most regularly were those who had to pay for what they received, and who had hard work to earn and then to save the money which enabled them to raise their school fees. Harry Birkett was amongst this class. He had, after much difficulty, saved his guinea, and he had now come fully bent on having his guinea's worth!

The secretary, a painstaking, enthusiastic educationalist, examined the candidates for admission, and advised with them, according to their qualifications and position in life, as to what class or classes they had better enter. Harry felt at once, when in this gentleman's presence, that the best way would be to "make a clean breast of it," and this he found to be of great service to him, for Mark Gibson had been speaking with the secretary but a few days before, and Harry's reception had been prepared for.

He was drafted off to the elementary English class for the first hour each evening; history, geography, and use of the globes the second hour. It was a great trial for him to sit on the form by

the side of little boys, who took a delight in trying to expose his ignorance; but he felt that he would not always be in this position. The trials of his life had not been lost upon him, as he had now laid in a good stock of what some people call philosophy, but what working men call "pluck." He had in the workshop endured the scoffs and jeers of unscrupulous men. He had been "chaffed" out of some things, out of some states of mind, and "chaffed" into others. He had "roughed it" for years, and was more inclined now than ever to take the world just as he found it, and make the most and best of it, rather than go about growling at the injustice which was being daily done. The teasing which the little boys gave him when "parsing," although it chafed him a little, never made him snarl. The fact of his having to endure the tortures of "the lower grammar class" for an hour each evening made him work very hard, in order that he might escape into the upper one. One circumstance which occurred here a few evenings after his admission had a marked effect upon his future progress.

The teacher had been a Scottish clergyman; but (as a long slouching youth told Harry the first night he saw him) was now out of a situation, and worried the life out of poor boys in this world, without in any way preparing them for a better. Harry

felt as sorry to find that not one of the boys had a good word to say for the teacher of the first class as he was glad to learn that every boy spoke in terms of affection respecting the master for the second hour. Indeed, the boys longed for the sound of the gong, which told them they must change classes, and it amused Harry very much, as exhibiting a phase of boyish life, to see the little urchins when leaving the Rev. John Motherford's class bow very respectfully to that gentleman, and immediately turn round making all sorts of grimace expressive of their contempt for him. They knew that the rules of the school did not allow the master to flog them, but they knew also he could punish them still more. He dressed very neatly in clerical costume, and sometimes strove, it was thought, to be pleasant with the young men and boys — his pupils. But it was clearly against his nature to be pleasant with anybody, for if he had a word of encouragement to give, he must, of necessity, add two of reproof. The boys expressed this by saying that "his toffee had gall in it."

The class was parsing the sentence, "they came nigh to the majestic river." It was customary for a chapter to be read by the class, each pupil reading a sentence. Then the sentences were taken and parsed, each pupil taking a word.

“Majestic, what part of speech? you, you big blockhead,” pointing to Harry Birkett.

Harry was considerably agitated at being thus addressed, and felt more hesitancy in reply than he otherwise might have done, but he managed to stammer out, “Adjective, sir.”

“Well, sir, degrees of comparison?” said the Rev. John Motherford sharply. “Come, sir, quick: your stupidity must not keep the class idle.”

There was a pause. Harry felt that all the class was looking at him. He knew that the little boys by his side were in ecstasies at his embarrassment. His face and ears had become fearfully hot.

“Come, sir, you shall not escape; how do you form the degrees of comparison, majestic, adjective? now then,” bawled out the master.

Harry scarcely knew what he was saying, but bearing in mind something about adding “er” and “est” to adjectives, he blurted out what passed before him, feeling at the same time that it was far from being the right answer.

“Ay, that is it, eh?” said the master, “Now, boys, I’ll show you what big blockheads and boobies I have to waste my time upon.” Thereupon he took up the chalk and wrote upon the large black board which was supported on an easel and faced the class—

Majesticer.

Majesticest.

“There’s English for you!” said he, with a cruel smile at the class, which was responded to by a loud laugh on the part of the little fellows who came to evening school for the fun of the thing.

Harry’s first thought was to rise, take his hat, and walk out. This would not be plucky, he then thought; and before he could decide rightly what it was best to do the gong sounded, the class was in commotion, and the pupils were scampering off to the second hour class-rooms.

Harry hesitated to leave the room. The thought flashed across his mind that he ought to speak to the Rev. John Motherford. It was certain that in his present state of feeling he could speak plainly, though not grammatically; the rev. gentleman might not consider his language elegant either. “Never mind,” said Harry to himself, “I’ve paid my guinea, he shall not drive me away; I’ll strike while the iron is hot.”

The master was engaged in taking snuff, an occupation in which he frequently employed his time. The seven o’clock class had departed, the eight o’clock had not yet arrived. Harry went up to the teacher.

“You’ll please to excuse me, sir; I think you

have not treated me fairly ; you have made a laughing-stock of me."

"How, how ! what is all this about ? Oh, I see. Yes, yes. You must be taught, you know ; you come here for that purpose, don't you ?" said the master.

"Yes," said Harry. "I come here to be taught, and I wish to be taught ; I am, too, quite willing and anxious to learn ; but you'll never teach me by showing me up as you did to-night. I don't want any favour shown to me, but I will have fairness. My money is paid, and I'll have my stuff for it."

Harry said this rather emphatically, and the master laughed.

"You'll not drive me away, so I tell you. We'll have to meet often, but if I am treated in this way any more I'll speak out in the class." Harry snatched his hat off the peg, and left the room, with a firmer resolution than ever that not one half-hour would he lose in prosecuting the study of English so far as would enable him to leave the class of such an inconsiderate teacher.

Harry had not to stay long under the reverend tutor. One evening the pupils had all assembled, and no master made his appearance. Whilst some of the eldest boys were talking of going to inform the secretary of the non-arrival of the teacher,

Mr. Motherford staggered into the room. He was intoxicated, and his efforts to look serious, or preserve himself from falling, excited the laughter of the boys. Harry had on many occasions thought that "the retired minister" was a tippler; but was chary in advancing such an opinion unless he had proof undeniable. Now there could be no mistake; neither did Harry hesitate. He went to the office, brought the secretaries, and asked them before the class whether it was right for a man in the state in which the Rev. John Motherford was then to be allowed to remain in the room. The teacher was at once removed, and Harry and the whole class were very glad to learn that he was the next week removed from the institution altogether.

In the teacher of the second English class Harry found a hearty and enthusiastic helper, and his love for the evening school was greatly increased by the esteem in which he held his teacher. He found under his kind and considerate guidance his labour considerably lightened, and his progress everything that he had hoped. He had got hold now, he felt this. Englishman like, he would now stick to it.

Not only in the school did Harry feel more comfortable, but at the shop; wherever he went a sense of satisfaction accompanied him. He bore the trials of his life bravely, feeling assured the

labours he was now pursuing would eventually assist to cheer his heart and home, wherever his lot might be cast. As he progressed in knowledge, too, he felt more self-reliant, was more hearty; and the natural flow of animal spirits which he kept up under the most adverse circumstances did not escape his mother's observation. His cheerful manners and love of playful mirth, the simple joys at home, and rural rambles, served to strengthen; and amidst all his joys, the delights of school, the companionship of friends whom he had there met, the struggles at business to gain a reputation for industry and to push his way above the crowd, there was one joy to his mind greater than all, that was to see the happiness and content of his dear mother. What would the lad's efforts have been without this? There she was, poorly clad, it is true, poorly fed, also. Yet her home was the abode of contentment and domestic peace, which alone will make any cot a palace.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BE TRUE TO YOURSELF.

"The wise and active conquer difficulties by daring to attempt them."

THE working men of England are often called upon to be true to themselves. This, like many other phrases in which would-be orators indulge, appears to be capable of unlimited expansion and very general application. It is, moreover, made to "do duty" in such a variety of ways, and amid such conflicting circumstances, that whatever force may have originally existed in it seems now in danger of being muddled up and lost sight of. For a man to be true to himself, to be a true man, is no doubt a fine subject to talk about; but, to descend from "fine" subjects and "fine" writing to everyday life and every-day phraseology, "it is easy to talk, but precious hard to do!" Honesty is one of the characteristics of true manhood, and it would be hard indeed to think so little of human nature, or to say that anyone could be found who would not admit the truth contained in the popular phrase, whilst they were at the same time "not so

clear" as to what might or might not be intended by the poetical one:

This was one of the phrases which Harry Birkett stumbled over, and was in one sense staggered by. Had he been "sufficiently educated" (?) or endowed largely with so-called worldly sagacity, he might have got rid of the difficulty by saying to himself that "in the abstract" the idea suggested was very beautiful, but as a matter of fact for a man to be true to himself in these days, "the thing is absurd, perfectly absurd." Ignorance of the ways of the world was not the bliss which Harry could boast of; and his worldly wisdom caused him to think that, although it might cost much every way for a man even in a humble sphere to be true to himself, yet the attempt should be made. He was vain enough also to think that, in one sense, he had set foot on this path, and that to the natural tastes there was nothing very cheerful or inviting in that portion of the road with which he was acquainted. But that was of small moment; it was the end to be gained — that was what Harry kept his eyes upon. Had he not in years before seen the mountain top at which he aimed stand out bright and clear for hours before he gained it? Sometimes it would appear so close at hand as to assure him there was now only that

crag to climb, that slope to scale, and then he might wave his cap from the summit. But the climbing of the crag revealed other and greater crags which would have to be got over. Still, with the keen winds whistling at their work in the mountain passes, Harry had vigorously plodded on, his aim the mountain top, his end strength—mental and physical. Similar labour he expected would secure like results in the attempt he was now bent on making to be true to himself—to rise in the social position.

Amongst the several advantages which he derived from regular attendance at the evening schools of the Mechanics' Institution was one which, more than all others just now, he felt to be useful to him—the strength of mind which he gained, and which enabled him to maintain his position in the workshop without in any way yielding to the usages of his shopmates. It was customary then, and to a great extent in all trades is still, that when a young man's term of servitude had expired, it should be celebrated by a feast, or carousal of some sort. Harry was frequently "trotted out," as the workmen term it, on the subject, with the view to ascertain what were his views. What sort of a "blow out" might be expected, was a question which Harry had frequently to answer or turn aside.

Without exception, the men were all given up, more or less, to habits of drinking. Some of them used to boast of days gone by, when they were young men, and had only to go home and ask "the old woman" for anything they liked, and there it was for them. Others used to relate stories of the rapidity with which they spent money, and the shifts they not unfrequently submitted to in order to gain it. Although in the receipt of good wages they were miserably clad, and had to subsist on dinners of coffee and dry bread four or five days out of every six, in order that they might have what they termed "a skinful" on Saturday night and Sunday. On Saturday evening there was generally an adjournment of the whole of the workmen to a public-house close by, where the shot for the week would be paid, and after that these "skilled workmen" would reckon up how much they could let their wives have of their earnings. If the wives were not waiting for them at the workshop door they well knew where the husbands were to be found, and followed them. Then husband and wife might have been seen, apparently devoid of care, spending the hard-earned money in what was destroying their peace and domestic comfort, as if there were no little ones at home who wanted food, clothes, and schooling. It was in vain that Harry

ventured sometimes to turn their attention in the direction of home.

Harry's day of freedom arrived. The usual shop honours were bestowed upon him; but when he proposed in the most serious manner, instead of sending out for drink, to treat them all to a good breakfast of "hot rolls and coffee," they were highly indignant. He might keep his breakfast, they could get a breakfast for themselves. It was what might have been expected, so they said; Harry had "stuck himself up" far too much. What was he? What was his mother? What was his home? What were his breakfasts, that he had such good ones to give away? Harry listened to himself being roundly abused, and then spoke out calmly, telling them in reply to their questions what he was. A poor lad trying to support a widowed mother; consequently had nothing to spare for idle feasting, least of all had he money to spend in that which had proved to his family the greatest earthly curse—drink. What was his mother? The kindest, best, most tender-hearted creature to him; a mother he delighted to honour, and of whom he would never be ashamed; a mother whose smile cheered him, yes, and warmed him on his return home. "What is my home?" said Harry. "Some of you know what it is, and all of you know that it is not the

home of the drunkard. If it be humble, it is also clean, and that it could not have been were I in the habit of going to the public-house [on Saturday evenings, or if my mother had followed me there.

Harry felt in a moment that he had gone too far. The thrust was too keen, and, well as it might have been deserved, coming from so young a man, it was not likely to be received without some display of temper. However, having given utterance to it, he felt himself bound to some extent to support the position he had taken, and resolved to brave it out.

There was not much more said, for the foreman soon afterwards came in, and then little or no conversation was allowed. Harry was soon made to feel, however, that he must not dare to offend shopmates with impunity. His work was often interfered with, his tools were thrown aside, every little annoyance which the petty tyranny of the workshop could suggest he was now subjected to, and it required all his pluck and all his good mother's consolation and support to enable him to bear up under the infliction. Harry was "sent to Coventry;" that is, no one was allowed to speak to him, under a small penalty; but this rather pleased him than otherwise. Shop tyranny, than which nothing is more grinding, could go no further. A

few days after Harry was "sent to Coventry," he heard the men in the shop speaking of a shopmate's wife who was ill. The husband had not been out of his apprenticeship very long, and for years Harry and he had been on intimate terms. His wife was now dangerously ill, and, so far as Harry could learn, she was not being properly attended to. Mrs. Birkett had known the young woman before her marriage, and when she heard from Harry the account of her dangerous illness, nothing would do but away she would go, then and there, and Harry must go with her to show her the street.

"Never mind now, Harry, what he has said to you, or whether he has been the ringleader against you, or whether he called your mother ever so many names. We are not going on his account, we are going to see if any thing can be done for his poor wife."

This was in reply to Harry, who urged the distance of Tom's house, and, moreover, that from the spirit he displayed in the shop it was very doubtful whether or not they would be kicked out for their pains.

Harry saw his mother's determination; he felt the force of her remarks, and, therefore, eating the supper prepared for him with greater speed than usual, he was soon ready to set off. His mother took

his arm while going along the dark lanes ; she put the hood of her old-fashioned cloak over her bonnet, and Harry felt indeed proud of her. Very few words passed between mother and son until they approached the town ; then Mrs. Birkett broke the silence by saying—

“I’ve been thinking, Harry, as we came along those dark lanes, what a time it is since you and I have walked out at night together. Years ago what weary walks we used to have in search of your poor father ! Yet, Harry, he was at one time as much opposed to the drinking customs of society as any young man could be ; still he was overcome and lost himself. Our nightly errands years ago, how different were they to that on which we go to-night. Have you seen anything of Tom’s wife lately ?”

“I have seen her once or twice waiting with the other men’s wives at the shop door on Saturday night, and I heard the men saying that on one occasion when she was at the ‘shot-house,’ she was asked when she came in what she would take, and her reply was, ‘A glass of whisky, if you please !’ They seemed from that to think that a woman who could toss off a glass of whisky in the company of her husband’s shopmates must have seen whisky before.”

“Well, it may be so,” said Mrs. Birkett ; she

may have been led into habits of drinking; but if husbands will induce their wives to follow them to the public-house, and then prevail upon them to drink 'their share,' they must expect to pay the penalty. She was a decent girl and a likely wife when Tom married her."

Tom lived in a court in one of the close streets near the centre of the town. The street through which they passed to reach the court was filthy, and, late as it was, Mrs. Birkett did not fail to direct Harry's attention to the fact of several little children who ought to have been in bed hours ago, but were now playing some rude and boisterous game under the shade of the large lamp suspended over the door of "Friendship Tavern." The air hereabouts was thick and heavy, contrasting forcibly with the pure atmosphere which surrounded Harry's rural home.

After some inquiry, the house where "Tom" lived was reached. It was the top house in the court, and a large open cesspool stood by the side of it. They knocked at the door several times, and received no reply; then Mrs. Birkett went next door, and, asked concerning the sick woman.

"Is there nobody in?" said an old man, who, with a sole in his hand, had just risen from the cobbler's seat.

"I can get no answer," said Mrs. Birkett.

"Well, the devil is in that fellow," said the shoemaker. "He was in here to-night, and told me his wife was very ill, and he must go and get somebody to stop up with her all night; but he does not know what he is doing half his time. Stop a minute, I'll get a light, and we'll try if we can get in."

He came with them to Tom's door. It was fast; but he produced a small knife, and with this slipped back the catch of the window, and soon scrambled in, and immediately afterwards opened the door, to admit Mrs. Birkett and her son. The house part in which they now stood might not at any time have looked cheering, but by the flickering light of a small candle which the shoemaker carried in the neck of a bottle it looked miserable in the extreme.

"I don't think as how they have lived comfortable for some time," said the shoemaker. "I've heard him a-welting her night after night. She looks through the bottoms of glasses, she does, and cocks her little fingers up too often, she does. Do you twig?" urged he, seeing that Mrs. Birkett expressed some surprise.

"But where is she?" said Mrs. Birkett.

"Oh! she'll be in the crib somewhere," replied the cobbler. "Come up in the loft."

He led the way up the narrow stairs, and Mrs. Birkett and Harry followed. The air in the room was pestilential, and on a bed, or a bundle of something which was used for that purpose, there lay the poor creature who had been the object of their search.

“ Oh ! misery, misery ! ” cried Mrs. Birkett, “ how fortunate it is, Harry, that we have come. Open the window, my dear boy, quick, quick, let us have some more air ; bad as it is, it will be better than this.”

She was soon on her knees beside the sick woman. “ She is in a high fever, Harry, you must get off at once ; a doctor must come here, or she must be removed to the hospital.”

Harry was swift to do his mother’s bidding ; but learning from the old cobbler that “ such a lot of people has been tuck to the hospital out of our street,” he thought it best to seek out the parish doctor. This in a poor neighbourhood is not often a difficult task, and was soon accomplished.

The woman was declared to be “ a dangerous case of typhus,” and an order was made out for her immediate removal. In the meantime the husband had returned, bringing with him an old relative to take care of his wife. He was very respectful to Mrs. Birkett, and fully agreed with her in thinking

that the attention his wife would receive in the hospital would be in every way better than he could procure for her at home.

It was grey morning light when mother and son reached their home. Harry was at the workshop at his usual time, and in his usual spirits, in the morning. The news of his mother's act reached there before him. Harry and his mother had heaped coals of fire upon the heads of his shopmates, and there was next day several attempts made, by talking of Mrs. Birkett and at Harry, to draw him gently out of Coventry.

Some months after, a misunderstanding had arisen between the master and foreman, and much to his surprise and delight Harry had the workshops given into his charge.

"You have been true to yourself, my dear boy," said his mother, "and now you are honoured for it."

CHAPTER XXVII.

STEADINESS AND ITS REWARD.

“Depend upon it, bold things require to be said to the lower as well as the higher classes.”

“I HAVE been very much pleased by your steadiness,” said the master, when he had called Harry Birkett down into the little back office, and was about to give him charge of the workshop.

Accustomed as Harry was to the kind tones of the master’s voice, there was something in them at this time which moved him, and led him to contrast the position in which he now stood with that of eight years ago. Then he stood in this same little office, with his father by his side, and promised solemnly “to demean himself in all things as a faithful apprentice ought to do;” and his master patted him on the head, hoping he would be a good boy and an honour to his father. Now he stood here alone—had endeavoured to fulfil that promise, and the success of his endeavour was

manifest as he heard himself addressed as "Mr. Birkett."

"Mr. Birkett, my future overseer," said the master, as he introduced Harry to the clerks and workpeople. "This, you see, is all the result of steadiness: we cannot all be great, but most of us may be good, and all of us may be useful; yet, without steadiness, we will be neither one nor the other. Away you go to your duties, now. Good-morning, Mr. Birkett."

Harry had to meet very curious looks that day. There was very little talk in the workshop, but much whispering. His position was one of great difficulty, but he was nobly encouraged by his mother.

"If steadiness has gained this for you, steadiness will enable you to keep it. Whatever injustice has been done to you by those who were placed over you, profit by the example, and avoid their errors."

Mrs. Birkett had been listening to Harry's shop experiences when she said this; and one of her daughters who had been enjoying "a day out"—that was, in her case, a long talk and a cosy tea with mother—sat opposite to her. They had many, many times wept together; to-day was their time to rejoice.

The steadiness which had so won the approbation of Harry's master often formed the subject of conversation between Harry and his mother. It implied much more than sobriety; yet then, as now, it was often, by many who ought to have known better, limited to that sense. If steadiness meant nothing more than regular attendance at the workshop, there were several much older hands than Harry whose qualification in that respect equally entitled them to promotion. Like him, they had come there poor, ragged little boys, had gone through the drudgery of the younger apprentices, worked through their term, were now men with families, and as they never neglected their employment for purposes of drunkenness—at least, "they never lost any time,"—were looked upon by others and considered themselves to be "steady men." There are now thousands of such men,—men who attend punctually to time, do the mill-horse round of work, do it, too, with as much ease as they can to themselves, and if the time is duly u in," the day passed over, and Saturday night comes round, that is all they care about. If such men are given to entertain decided opinions on any matter, they will, perhaps, just amount to this—that the master's interest differs very widely from theirs; and what in all probability would benefit

him, would to a dead certainty injure them. They never lose time for drinking purposes, they will tell you. No, there is no occasion for that. Saturday night and Sunday gives them ample opportunity for spending what money they have, or, if anything should remain, they have been "unlucky enough," or rather inconsiderate enough, to find partners who can speedily dispose of the remainder.

The steadiness to which Harry's master alluded enters deeper into the conduct and acts more powerfully on the life than simple and regular attendance at the workshop. Abstinence from drink will add vigour and vitality to it, yet it is more than that alone. It is fixedness of purpose—a man setting before him an object in life, and with energy, fortitude, and indomitable perseverance, pressing on and securing what he has set his heart upon. A man need not be "remarkably clever," as the phrase is. He may not be "talented," whatever some understand by the word ; but if he aims high and acts honourably, he must have decision of character, a due respect for the feelings of others—he must be self-reliant, and have a good share of self-control. Patience enters very largely into steadiness. A man will not gain much or make any way by being petulant or dissatisfied with the ups and downs of life. Any road becomes comparatively smooth and

easy if it be patiently persevered in by one stout of heart.

There are many men amongst the operative classes of England who rank under the head of "steady," who would vastly increase their own social and domestic comfort if they would but practise the precepts which that term implies. They are now better educated, have also the sagacity to see the way in which the ladder of life must be mounted; but they have not learnt self-denial at school, neither have they seen it practised at home. Some are seen who form a resolution, and boldly dash out from the crowd and take a step up the ladder. But, alas! they needs must come down again to treat their resolution, or, as the fashion of the day wills it, "to refresh themselves!" Yes, "refreshment," forsooth, in which sixty millions of money is annually spent. Having obtained the "necessary refreshment," they make another attempt to rise and emancipate themselves from thralldom. And so it is their lives pass away in going up a step or two and then coming down to boast amongst jovial companions how high they have been up. They make no upward progress. How can they? Their practices exhaust their strength as well as diminish their inclination to ascend, and then they become thoroughly disgusted

with the attempt, settle down into growling, dissatisfied mortals, not forgetting to boast, though, that it is their "sterling honesty and goodness of heart" which alone have prevented or checked their exaltation. Harry Birkett, on the "rough and ready" estimates which his limited opportunities afforded him, had in the little world in which he moved, and in which he had received the great lessons of life, met with several such so-called "steady men;" and there were not wanting in the shop of which he had now charge those who attributed his promotion to anything but the true cause. Envy assumes many shapes. It must, however, be borne in mind that, at the period to which the story now points, there existed in this country better opportunities for a master to study the character of his apprentices than exist now. This may be said without in any way disparaging the altered state of things, caused mainly by the rapid extension of trade and commerce. There was in most trades not so much division of labour. That was the age of workshops, this is the age of factories. These simple terms imply the change. Then the master was not above going through his workshop in his shirt-sleeves. He was often there to open the shop, or see that it was done; and he was, perhaps, the first to salute his men or apprentices on their

arrival. He mixed freely with all his workpeople, saw not only what was done, but (what after all becomes the main thing) with what will it was done. Masters now drive to business at ten or eleven o'clock, either in the showy "trap" or on the top of an omnibus. They pay weekly wages in most cases to workpeople whom they never see, and workpeople are not (educate them at school as you may) apt to think more highly than they ought to think of masters who are said to be "great capitalists," but whose chief representative in the workshop is "a code of laws for the regulation of the shop" suspended from the wall.

Harry's master was one of the old school. He called his apprentices "my lads," and treated them as such. He was most completely devoted to his business, had a real love of it, and did all in his power to inspire his lads with the same. But then, as now, few workshops are good schools of morality, and the example and teaching of the master was in most cases destroyed by the practices and conversation of the men. Resolute and self-willed as Harry Birkett was, he too would have been kept down to the standard of his shopmates had it not been for his home, and her who presided over it. That was his strong tower. If he, like others, had been compelled to witness at home conduct which gave the

lie to every good precept or example of the master at the shop, he must have fallen, rise he could not. The marked difference that existed between a youth who spent his evenings in frivolous amusements or vicious practices,—the penny show, or the little ale-cellar,—and one who sat quietly and thoughtfully poring over some loved volume, or listening to the wise maxims of the country-people, as detailed by a fond and tender mother, could not fail to attract the attention of a sagacious man of the world like Harry's master.

In this was shown Harry's steadiness, his devotedness to the object he had set before him. The temptations of shopmates, as well as the allurements of merely sensual pleasures, were sternly resisted, many times not without a great effort. The master could not fail to notice this either, for who can go on from day to day fighting a battle in life, such as many poor youths have to fight, and not gain by it, not only strength, but renown? Whatever the weather, whatever the nature of the work, there was Harry punctual to time, and apparently rejoicing in his labour; not doing what was given him with stint, as if he could do too much for his master, or as if his progress at his trade might reduce the amount of labour for any one else. No; notwithstanding the checks which were given him by the

“old hands,” he did what he could and as much as he could without grudging. That he “wore the master’s clothes” was often thrown at him as a term of reproach. But Harry, and his mother too, although proud enough in their own way, thought that it was better to make up and wear the cast-off clothes of the master than to adopt the plan generally acted upon in the shop, which was to sell the clothes and expend the proceeds in “treating all hands.” The other apprentices in some instances were “too proud” to wear cast-off clothes, but were not too mean to sell them for drink. An exhibition of pride which may still be seen, notwithstanding the boasted progress of the age.

When Harry’s father had been so sorrowfully cut off, the master had full opportunity of testing the character and disposition of his apprentice, and in every eventful turn of his life the master’s eye had watched and followed him. Hence it was, that, notwithstanding his comparative inexperience in business, Harry was chosen to control, and, in some respects, to govern others, the master being thoroughly convinced that he had obtained considerable experience in governing and controlling himself.

Had it not been for the kind and judicious counsel and assistance of his master, who was well able to

judge of the difficulties which beset his young foreman, Harry might have failed ; not, however, by any negligence on his own part, but through the malice and envy of those with whom his lot was cast ; and here it was that his “steadiness” proved valuable. His stern sense of duty and love of work, together with the hopeful spirit which it had been his aim to cultivate, steered him clear of all difficulties and dangers, and he soon found himself out in the open with plenty of sea-room, and every opportunity afforded to him to make the most and best of his position.

As Harry’s circumstances became thus improved, his constant endeavour was to allow the result of this improvement to be seen and felt at home. Week by week, as the earnings would afford it, some article for domestic adornment or use would be added ; and the son’s reward was rich indeed, as he saw the remembrances of happy years kindled in his mother’s heart by the increase of household joys. They had both been content and happy with their humble lot, but yet they knew how rightly to enjoy

“The sober comfort, all the peace which springs
From the large aggregate of little things.”

Hence it was, all the little things on which it has been well said

“The almost sacred joys of home depend,”

were added, as their means allowed, until they reached that true pitch of happiness, and wondered whether any one was as happy as they were!

The friendships which Harry had formed at the evening schools had been to him of great use, and now were beginning to tell upon his character. A visit to a fellow-student's home often gave him hints as to the arrangement or conduct of his own; and mingling with that class of society whose

“Happiness and true philosophy
Are of the social, still, and smiling kind,”

cheered his heart, strengthened his purpose, and directed more clearly his aim in life.

He had been almost twelve months installed in the office of foreman, and had got everything into that order and mode of working which his master desired, when he ventured to ask for a holiday, and it was to be a tolerably long one. He had worked now more than eight years, and had not been a day from business; and he was encouraged to hope that his master would so far favour him as to grant this little indulgence which he had, for many years, anxiously looked forward to. He was not disappointed. A week's leave of absence was heartily given; and when Harry told his master that he was going to see the house in which his mother had lived in early life,—that he was going to see Poe-

beck, where he had gambolled as a boy,—that he was going to see dear old friends, who had really proved themselves so indeed,—the eyes of the old man filled, and he went quickly into his little office. When Harry got to the coach-office in the morning, he found that his master had been there before him, and his “fare” was paid, “one outside to Poebeck.”

Many times on the receipt of letters from Mr. Roper or others, Harry had wondered whether it would ever be his fortune to visit Poebeck. Now, when on the top of the coach, rattling over fine roads and past pleasant homesteads, along rural lanes amidst the fragrance of new-mown hay, over mosses where the heather gladdened his heart, round mountains, the grey terraces of which reminded him of the rugged course of his life since last he gazed on these scenes, Harry felt what some would fain purchase and others vainly sigh for—true happiness. Work and care, the shop and its round of duties, were now far enough away; the mountain breeze laden with invigorating freshness was already imparting a healthy glow to his cheek; and his heart was beating high with the prospect of greater joys than these—the greetings of warm hands and hearts at his journey’s end.

It was almost dusk when Poebeck was reached; but late as it was, the evening being fine and clear,

Harry felt bound to walk over and look upon the scenes which had been all in all to him "in life's morning march when his bosom was young." Mr. Roper was delighted to see him. His daughter, too, the poor deformed little woman, who had been so kind to Harry, how she did laugh, and then shake hands, and then laugh again, and then straighten her apron, as if the joy of seeing him had quite upset her usual gravity. Mr. Brill, Harry found, had left Poebeck. He had obtained a little property by the death of a relative; this, together with what his boat had brought in, and his little Nelly had saved for him, gave him a sufficient income to retire upon. His wants were very simple, his desires ever moderate, and he had been induced by friends to give up going to sea, and had now a small cottage near one of the northern lakes, and a little boat upon it. There Nelly and himself had "made fast;" so he said in a note to Mr. Roper, and "When little Harry comes, tell him to tumble up and turn into our little caboose. Nelly will make the pot boil for him, and he may catch his own fish in the lake, if he likes."

"Kind-hearted old Brill!" said Mr. Roper; when you have looked about you a little, you must tramp up and see him, Harry."

There was little fear of Harry failing to see the kind old fisherman.

Sunday was a busy day with Mr. Roper, and Harry did not like to encroach upon those duties of the old man which he knew lay so near his heart. He proposed to leave Poebeck on the Saturday, so that he might spend Sunday amongst the mountains, or with old Brill. The partings were keenly felt. One young man, who as a boy had gone to the Sunday-school, now brought his son, "a bonny laal felley," to "shak han's" with Harry! "Dear, dear, what a change in every body and thing," thought Harry. "The streets look narrower, the houses smaller, the piers not half so big as they were. The only thing in which I see no diminution is the goodness of that old Ranter. His lamp burns more brightly, his heart beats more warmly, his hand is more open than ever. Is it not so, Tom?" said Harry to an old playmate who had agreed to walk out of town with him.

"Nay, there's no falling off there. Old Roper used to be feared by the fellows at the forge; but there's been 'sic wark' since this teetotal come up, that now he's loved by every one. He has faults, I suppose, because nobody is without; but they're vara few, I think."

Harry had a long walk before he reached the

margin of the lake near which Brill's cottage stood. It was a mild evening in Midsummer, and the last rays of the sun were brightening the peaks of the mountains that stood around the valley. There were two or three boats on the water, and the splashing of the oars and the ripple of the tiny waves on the gravelly beach were the only sounds that broke the solitude. Harry sat down by the margin of the water, and waited for the boats to land, in order that he might make inquiries respecting Mr. Brill, about whose place of residence he was not clear. Just then, from one of the boats a gruff voice broke forth,

“ And we'll never get drunk aga-a-a-in,
And we'll never get drunk aga-a-in.”

Brill, by all that's delightful! thought Harry, and he waited for the old man to come close in shore. Yes, there was the old fisherman, singing away one of the old teetotal hymns which Nelly had brought him from the Ranters.

Harry waited until the old man landed, and was going to pull his boat round and drag it high and dry on the gravel, before he ventured to speak; then, going up, offered to lend him a hand.

“ All right, my hearty,” said Brill. But when Harry went to lay hold of the boat, and called out “ Now, then, cheerily with a will,” Jem stood

“right straight up,” as he afterwards said, “to stare at him.”

“Say that again, say that again,” said Brill.

“Now, then, cheerily with a will,” repeated Harry.

“What! ay, I knowed as much. You got that from old Jem Brill, you did. You’re—yes you are—yes, you are—you’re little Harry Birkett! Little Harry Birkett half as big again as old Jim, that you are! Say the word,” said the old man, very much excited.

Harry was much amused at the excitement of his old friend and at once declared himself.

“Harry it is!” roared Brill, “I know’d it all the while! Oh, won’t my Nelly make a currant-cake for you, my boy!” And the old man, leaving his boat to the mercy of the evening breeze, caught hold of Harry by the hand, squeezed him anything but tenderly, and then dragged him off to his cottage. Brill could say nothing for some distance but “Oh, won’t my Nelly be glad! Won’t my Nelly be glad! You shall come with us to the christening.”

Harry spent a very happy evening with the old couple. Jem had become very grey, and Nelly had become very stout, but they were as proud of each other as ever, and they called each other names as

endearing as of old. Harry had to repeat for them the story of his life, and it was almost day-dawn when he got to sleep in the little room, on the floor of which was a carpet of Nelly's own making, and around the walls were suspended the artistic decorations on which Harry had gazed years before in Poebeck.

The christening to which Jem alluded would be held at the house of a relative several miles away, and Nelly had promised to attend. Jem would row them to the top of the lake, then they would have about six miles of walking. These "christenings" Harry had often heard his mother speak of, and as they illustrated the manners and customs of the dalesmen in the northern valleys, he was glad of the opportunity to attend. It was, as Jem declared it would be, a "great do." Neighbours and friends came popping in during the afternoon, forming "set" after "set" around the tea-table in the little parlour, and then assembling in the large kitchen with the black roof to talk over their joys and trials since last they met. Some of them had come from a great distance—had not seen their relations since the last christening, and the hearty manner in which they greeted each other was very pleasant to see. As evening approached, the "lads" must take the "lasses" and "set them a bit of the way home,"

and in this respect Harry was charged by Jem not to be "clumpish," or shirk his duty.

There was an interest attached to this gathering in the mind of Harry Birkett beyond that which has been named. The inquiries which he had made from time to time and year by year respecting the peat-cutter's family on the moss, in whose simple cot he had experienced true hospitality, led him to believe that they were now residing somewhere in this district. Harry's inquiries from Mrs. Brill confirmed this opinion, and he had not been very long amongst the joyous company before his happiest dreams had been realized. The fair-haired little girl at whose side Harry had been laid when, foot-sore and exhausted, he had, through his father's intercession, obtained admission to the cottage on that bitter night, was now a well-formed, rosy-cheeked country lass. She lived in service a few miles off, but, of course, must "get out" to the christening, and Harry was pleased beyond measure to renew his acquaintance with her.

Much as Brill and his wife were employed in greeting friends and receiving the congratulations of others, Harry's attention to the fair lass did not escape their observation, and he was teased about it. He explained that he was only talking to her about the place where he used to live—Hazel,—and

the girl had told him that she "came off that way."

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Brill, "it's very likely, isn't it, Jem? Do you recollect when you took me home the first night, you old grey-beard?"

"Don't I, Nelly," replied Jem.

Harry had promised to walk a little way home with the rosy-faced lass "from off Hazel-way," and he kept his word. That walk secured Harry Birkett his wife. His visits to "the north" were after this regularly paid, and his interest in the country was considerably deepened. A good, modest, hard-working, thrifty country girl, with judgment enough rightly to cook a meal, taste enough to dress neatly, and pride enough to keep her house clean, was the "style" of wife Mrs. Birkett had urged her son to look out for and secure. In two years after his visit to the christening, Harry Birkett was united to the peat-cutter's daughter, as much to the joy of his mother as to himself.

Mark Gibson, now a prosperous man, gave the bride away, and with great good sense at breakfast alluded to the peculiar providences, trials, and temptations of Harry's life. The office which he was then called upon to fill was a very pleasant one. The little girl whom Harry used to talk about so much during these long winter nights at

Hazel was now about to become Mrs. Birkett. They were worthy of each other, and he felt assured that happiness, social and domestic, would bless the union.

The peat-cutter's daughter proved herself every way worthy of the name she bore, Jane Birkett; and her kindness and tenderness to that dear old mother in her declining years were everything that Harry or his mother could desire.

Thus it has been simply told how Harry Birkett helped himself. He has been traced from youth to manhood, and he is now seen setting out in life, and his progress from this point will yet be written. He is one of a class of men which in England is not uncommon, but yet is hardly understood. It will be seen that he had, perhaps, fewer natural talents than many poor boys possess, was exposed to as many bitter trials as most are called to endure; but he was fortunate in one respect, and assuredly without this he might be now what hundreds of those who started on the race with him are, dissolute men or maudlin drunkards. He was fortunate in having as a guardian a good, kind, sober, industrious, frugal mother; a woman of the true English mould, not too proud to patch her clothes, nor too religious to read her Bible—too proud to be mean, yet so mean as to be honest.

Harry honoured his mother, honoured her with his substance as it increased, honoured her with all that he possessed. This commandment has a promise attached to it, and that is now in course of fulfilment.

THE END.

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